





Bf 7. 51







AN INQUIRY  
CONCERNING  
THE INDICATIONS  
OF  
INSANITY.





AN INQUIRY  
CONCERNING  
THE INDICATIONS  
OF  
INSANITY,

WITH  
SUGGESTIONS FOR THE BETTER PROTECTION AND  
CARE OF THE INSANE.

---

BY JOHN CONOLLY, M.D.

PROFESSOR OF MEDICINE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON.

---

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR JOHN TAYLOR,  
BOOKSELLER AND PUBLISHER TO THE UNIVERSITY,  
30, UPPER GOWER STREET.

---

MDCCCXXX.

LIBRARY  
COLL. REC.  
MED. UNIV.

LONDON

GAULTER, Printer, Lovell's Court, Paternoster-Row.



# CONTENTS.

---

## CHAPTER I.

	<i>Page</i>
INTRODUCTION .....	1

## CHAPTER II.

THE PRESENT CONDITION OF LUNATIC HOUSES AND LUNATICS	10
--	----

## CHAPTER III.

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE HUMAN UNDERSTANDING .....	34
---	----

## CHAPTER IV.

THE VARIOUS DEGREES OF PERFECTION IN WHICH THE FACULTIES OF THE UNDERSTANDING ARE POSSESSED BY DIFFERENT INDIVIDUALS .....	61
--	----

## CHAPTER V.

INEQUALITIES, WEAKNESSES, AND PECULIARITIES OF THE HUMAN UNDERSTANDING, WHICH DO NOT AMOUNT TO INSANITY .....	93
---	----

## CHAPTER VI.

MODIFICATIONS OF INTELLECTUAL ACTIVITY AND POWER BY VARIOUS STIMULI .....	178
---	-----

## CHAPTER VII.

	<i>Page</i>
MODIFICATIONS OF INTELLECTUAL ACTIVITY AND POWER BY DISEASE .....	233

## CHAPTER VIII.

MODIFICATIONS OF INTELLECTUAL ACTIVITY AND POWER BY AGE .....	270
--	-----

## CHAPTER IX.

INSANITY .....	287
----------------	-----

## CHAPTER X.

APPLICATION OF THE INQUIRY TO THE DUTIES OF MEDICAL MEN, WHEN CONSULTED CONCERNING THE STATE OF A PATIENT'S MIND .....	361
--	-----

## CHAPTER XI.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE BETTER PROTECTION AND CARE OF THE INSANE .....	478
---	-----



## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTION.

FOR many years past, during five of which I held the appointment of Inspecting Physician to the Lunatic Houses for the County of Warwick, I have availed myself, both in this and in other countries, of such opportunities as presented themselves to me of examining the correctness of the opinions contained in the following pages.

In offering them for the examination of others, my desire is to render the recognition of insanity less difficult, by showing in what it differs from those varieties of mind which approach the nearest to it; and to point out those circumstances which, even in persons decidedly insane, can alone justify various degrees of restraint.

That an inquiry of a difficult nature, and opposed, in this country, by peculiar obstacles, must be incomplete, I freely admit. The interests of the public greatly require that medical men, to

whom alone the insane can ever properly be entrusted, should have opportunities of studying the forms of insanity, and of preparing themselves for its treatment, in the same manner in which they prepare themselves for the treatment of other disorders. They have at present no such opportunities. During the term allotted to medical study the student never sees a case of insanity, except by some rare accident. Whilst every hospital is open, every lunatic asylum is closed to him; he can study all diseases but those affecting the understanding,—of all diseases the most calamitous. The first occurrence, consequently, of a case of insanity, in his own practice, alarms him: he is unable to make those distinctions which the rights and the happiness of individuals and of families require; and has recourse to indiscriminate, and generally, to violent or unnecessary means; or gets rid of his anxiety and his patient together, by signing a certificate, which commits the unfortunate person to a mad-house. In the plan of his medical study, therefore, attention to diseases affecting the mind forms hardly any part; and it has thus happened that many individuals have been ignorantly confined, and unjustly detained in houses for the reception of lunatics; and persons of all ages, suffering under temporary mental derangement, from temporary causes, shut up with the incurable: nor is it any exaggeration to say,



that such treatment has in many cases destroyed all hope of recovery.

Let no one imagine that even now it is impossible or difficult to effect the seclusion of an eccentric man; or easy for him, when once confined, to regain his liberty. The timidity, or ignorance, or, it may be, a dishonest motive, of relatives, leads to exaggerated representations; and the great profit accruing from a part of practice, almost separated from general medicine, cannot but now and then operate against proper caution in admitting such representations. When men's interests depend upon an opinion, it is too much to expect that opinion always to be cautiously formed, or even in all cases honestly given. The most respectable practitioners in this department openly justify the authorising of restraint, before the patient is seen, and on the mere report of others: and it seems that depositions to the insanity of individuals have been received in courts of law, concerning persons with whom the deponents have never had an interview; and that on these depositions proceedings have been partly founded, of which the results were the imprisonment of lunatics, and restraint over their property. When the affair is conducted with more formality, and the suspected person is visited before being imprisoned, those who visit him are often very little acquainted with mental disorders, and come rather

to find *proofs* of his insanity, which, to minds prepossessed, are seldom wanting, than cautiously to examine the state of his mind. If a person of sound mind were so visited, and knew of the visit beforehand, it would not be quite easy for him so to comport himself, as to avoid furnishing *conviction* that he was *not* of sound mind. His indignation would pass for raving; his moderation, for the proverbial cunning of a lunatic. A man of an undisturbed understanding, suddenly surprised by the servants of a lunatic asylum, with handcuffs ready, and a coach waiting to carry him off, would infallibly exhibit some signs, easily construed into proofs that he was "not right in his head:" a man of shy and eccentric habits, if exposed to a similar outrage, would manifest his feelings in modes still more peculiar, and furnish abundant proofs of undeniable madness: and if the attempt was made on an individual of susceptible nervous system, of irritable temperament, suffering too under some temporary cause of discomposure or affliction, no one who has ever attended to the inequalities of his own mind can doubt, that his mental government would be sufficiently shaken to warrant any restraint or coercion on the part of those who would seldom be found reluctant to restrain and coerce.

Once confined, the very confinement is admitted as the strongest of all proofs that a man must be



mad. When, after suffering so much wrong, he has an opportunity of speaking to the appointed visitors of the house,—supposing him to be confined where he can be visited, and supposing him not to give way to his feelings, but to control them,—his entreaties, his anxious representations, his prayers for liberty, what do they avail! The keeper of the asylum is accustomed to all these things; he knows that the truly and dangerously insane can act in the same way; and from ignorance, in the absence of any bad intention, does away with all the effect of the patient's words. The visitors, knowing nothing of the shades of disordered mind, or not reflecting upon them, are told that they see “the best of him;” that it is one of his “good days;” that he is often “dreadfully violent;” or that if left to himself “he will commit suicide:” and they shrink from the responsibility of deciding where they know it is very possible they may be wrong.

Besides this, there is the ready and indisputable Certificate, signed by a medical man,—physician, surgeon, or apothecary, stating that the man is mad and must be confined in a lunatic asylum. It matters not that the certificate is probably signed by those who know little about madness or the necessity of confinement; or by those who have not carefully examined the patient: a visitor fears to avow, in the face of such a document, what may be set down as mere want of



penetration in a matter wherein nobody seems in doubt but himself; or he may even be tempted to affect to perceive those signs of madness which do not exist. The owner of the lunatic asylum is a most respectable man,—a neighbour, a friend, perhaps; and the asylum is his fortune; to depreciate it, or to cast a doubt upon a case where he has none, may be to ruin him: and the sense of duty in an honorary visitor could hardly lead him to run such a risk, even in cases of more flagrant mismanagement than are now commonly to be met with.

Of all these matters the public are not altogether unsuspicious, and hence arises an evil of an opposite description: for the occasional detection of mistakes, and the dread of committing a beloved relative to a lunatic asylum; the opinion that to pronounce an individual insane is equivalent to pronouncing a sentence of separation from every friend, and an abandonment of all care of him to strangers; does really prevent in some instances such interference as the interests and comfort of families require; and those to whom temporary superintendence and slight restraint would be salutary, are allowed to ruin their fortunes, or to make a whole family wretched, because restraint, when once determined on, is seldom apportioned to the individual case, but is indiscriminate and excessive and uncertain in its termination.

No provision of the Legislature can prevent the occurrence of these grievous mistakes, unless opportunities are at the same time given of making medical men as familiar with disorders of the mind as with other disorders; and thus of rescuing lunatics from those whose interest it is to represent such maladies as more obscure, and more difficult to manage than any other. It would be some compensation for the unavoidable evils of public lunatic asylums, if each establishment of that kind became a Clinical school, in which, under certain restrictions, medical students might prepare themselves for their future duties to the insane. It is true that insane patients are not always in a state to be visited by pupils, and that a very strict discipline would be necessary to prevent disorder or impropriety: but such discipline is quite practicable; and such arrangements might be made as would at once guard those patients from disturbance whom disturbance might injure, and present a sufficient number of instructive examples to the student. In some cases, also, the change of persons and of conversation would be actually beneficial to the patients; and would only be what they are now accustomed to, during the visits of persons who come to see them from mere curiosity. Among the many intelligent young men resorting to the London schools of medicine and surgery, some would soon be found who would zealously study



mental disorders, and by acting under the physician or medical superintendent, most materially assist him. Opportunities would then be afforded of trying every variety of medical and of mental or moral treatment, and particularly of practising all those methods of influencing the mind, which separately slight, are, in connection, very availing and being only practicable at favourable moments not only require great discretion, but a degree of superintendence which is at present impossible. We should then see how much could really be done in these affections, and should hear no more of mistakes which have from time to time afforded so much matter for litigation, so much personal uneasiness, and, in some cases, so much oppression and fraud.

Every man is interested in this subject; for no man can confidently reckon on the continuance of his perfect reason. Disease may weaken, accident may disturb, anxiety may impair it; and if every departure from sound mind may subject the person so affected to an indiscriminate treatment, including deprivation of property and personal liberty, no man can be sure that he may not, with a full consciousness of his sufferings and wrongs, be one day treated as if all sense and feeling were in him destroyed and lost;—torn from his family, from his home, from his innocent but eccentric pursuits, and condemned, for an inde-



finite period, to pass his melancholy days among the idiotic and the mad.

It would be idle to talk of the feelings not being engaged in an inquiry of this kind. Every feeling prompts us to the investigation. Yet, I trust, in the following attempt to prosecute it, I shall be found to have taken facts and well-established examples for my guide, and to have offered no opinions which have not received some confirmation from observation and experience.\*

\* It is my desire to avoid direct allusion to recent circumstances, which, belonging to the *system* followed with respect to cases of supposed lunacy, rather than to the individuals concerned, have reflected very undeserved odium on a gentleman with whose kindness and skill in the treatment of his patients I have had opportunities of being acquainted. I allude to Dr. Burrows; who has assuredly been treated with unjust severity. With the opinions yet prevalent in society on the subject of insanity, sufficient allowance is not made for the extremely difficult position in which those individuals are placed who receive lunatics under their care; and who are often at once responsible for any accident that may happen from the lunatic's conduct from the moment they are applied to, and at the same time subject to unmeasured condemnation if they fall into mistakes not always easy to be avoided in the anxious circumstances in which applications, often of a very hasty and pressing nature, are made to them.

## CHAPTER II.

THE PRESENT CONDITION OF LUNATIC HOUSES AND  
LUNATICS.

THE first visit to a Lunatic Asylum is commonly made with mingled curiosity and apprehension. A scene of riot and disorder, and even some degree of danger, are expected; sights and sounds of the most painful description, and a spectacle of confusion and of suffering. With the exception, therefore, of travellers who are determined to see every thing, and of certain intelligent and benevolent individuals who are deterred by no fear of personal inconvenience from visiting any place in which human wretchedness exists, these establishments have few visitors. Travellers content themselves with writing down the number of patients, the general plan of treatment, as far as an hour's visit can show them it, and memorandums of a few striking cases. Those who visit the asylums with the design of inquiring into and improving them, are seldom able to penetrate into private institutions; and feel afraid to obtrude their imperfect observations on those who live among the insane in large establishments, which *they* only see on a few occasions in the year, and perhaps never without



a degree of mental agitation unfavourable to calm observation. To these circumstances it must be attributed, that for so long a period very gross enormities were practised in public institutions for the insane, without any control and without remark; and that even at this day so many circumstances exist, in the best conducted establishments, that is to say, in the public ones, and so many more in the private ones, unfavourable to the persons who have the misfortune to be shut up in them.

Yet there is little in a well-conducted asylum to shock or to alarm the feelings of a spectator who is familiar with other forms of suffering; even the worst of maladies will be found not incapable of many alleviations. To those who are habituated to the spectacle, or who may think it not an unworthy attempt to try to become so, I think the following observations will appear naturally to arise from it.

When we contemplate the inmates of such an establishment, we cannot fail to perceive that, although all of them may be labouring under disorders interfering with and modifying the manifestations of mind, the degrees and shades of affection are very variable, and almost infinite: that, like the persons *without* the walls of the institution, each individual has a distinct character, his own trains of thought, his own peculiar habits, his own pursuits.

If, then, we find that each individual is sub-



jected, or that most of the individuals are subjected, to the same, or very nearly the same treatment, it is reasonable to presume that many of them will never be benefited by it. The *confinement* of lunatics is one general circumstance of treatment to which those whom I have supposed to be the object of contemplation are subjected. They are confined with persons so far similarly affected, that all are of unsound mind; yet the confinement which some among the crowd before us may require, must be detrimental to some of the rest. The confinement which was necessary to many of them on the first invasion of the malady, must be hurtful to some as the malady declines. Conversation and reasoning, which would at one time have been quite thrown away upon them, may be attended to at another time, and be salutary.

How far, then, are the two important parts of the treatment of insane persons, the medical part and the moral and mental part, provided for? Is the first as indiscriminate in all its particulars as in the article of confinement? Was it continued only for the first few days or weeks of the patient's illness, and is it now abandoned? Is the moral and mental treatment as much neglected, as the spectacle of this wild assemblage seems to indicate? Is it disregarded? If not disregarded, how is its efficient application combined with these appearances of its application being impossible? Let us consider

all the circumstances which may elucidate these questions.

A man is deemed a lunatic ; a certificate has been signed, to the effect that confinement in a lunatic asylum is necessary to his recovery : the patient is taken away from his family ; abandoned by his usual medical attendant ; waited upon by strangers, and his whole management confided to a person whose profession it is to cure lunatics ; to one who, if he is a medical practitioner, seldom professes to think the mind worthy of particular consideration ; or, it may be, to one who is altogether ignorant both of bodily and mental disease. The care of lunatics being generally lucrative, it has happily followed that many respectable, well-educated, and humane individuals have, in different parts of the country, devoted their time and their talents to their management. But there are many exceptions : the prospect of certain profit allures some capable of no feeling but a desire for wealth, and the most ignorant and uneducated men, or *women*, are, in some instances, the keepers of houses for the reception of lunatics. The patients are transmitted, like stock in trade, from one member of a family to another, and from one generation to another ; they come in youth to the father, they linger out their age with the son. An uniform system of restraint is enjoined, which saves all trouble ; and a book of prescriptions is bequeathed as a sub-



stitute for the physician or apothecary. When an occasional, perhaps an annual visit of inspection is made, as was recently the case, and the patients are dressed, and the house is set in order, it is forgotten that, with very rare exceptions, *the same* miserable prisoners are for ever presented to the visitors; at each visit declining more and more into imbecility; that some have lost the power of motion; that others have lost the habit of speech; that some have become desperate; and some, after vain desperation, sullen; and that of those first seen, a very large proportion will remain in the institution to the end of their lives. It may be, that in the interval which has passed since the last visit, one or two lunatics have been received, have got better, and have returned to their homes. But the majority of the incurable is still immense, and of those, if we inquire into their history, we shall find many who came to the establishment in the prime of life, or in youth; and when we curiously trace the remains of intellectual light, or the vestiges of grace and beauty in these unhappy beings, we too seldom remember the possibility that more of both might have been spared, under a different system of management.

Medical authorities agree in ascribing mental disorders to corporeal disease, not to any specific corporeal disease, but to any disease capable of disturbing the functions, or impairing the structure of



the brain. I fully concur in this belief: but we do not find in insanity, as in consumption, such invariable disorganization or impairment as would account for the long continuance of the malady, or for the small proportion of cures effected. We observe also with respect to cases of insanity, an indifference to medical treatment, which is not observed in other cases of corporeal disease; and, admitting the want of full and strict analogy between the two cases, the reasonable conclusion is, that the disorder is imperfectly understood and insufficiently attended to.

That it should be imperfectly understood, cannot be a matter of surprise, for it has been very superficially studied. Some of the most manifest conditions of bodily disorder which occasion insanity, such as violent determination of blood to the head, and inflammation of the brain or its membranes, have not escaped attention, and what is called the medical treatment of insanity, generally consists of a few proceedings founded on the supposition of the invariable existence of one of these states. When an unruly patient enters a common lunatic house, he is bled, dressed in a strait waistcoat, has his head shaved, is subjected to the shower bath, put upon low diet, kept in darkness, and compelled to swallow some active purgative medicine. If measures of this kind, which may be well enough suited to active delirium, do not effect

any amendment, the medical resources of the establishment are at an end. Starvation, imprisonment, loneliness, and threats are then resorted to ; or if the proprietor of the house happens to be very alert, some desperate, or some unjustifiable experiment is tried ; whirling round upon an horizontal wheel, intoxication, or some strange method of astonishing the patient ; such as leading him blindfold and headlong into a cold bath. At last peace is effected. The patient is exhausted ; or his excitement is succeeded by what is called the low state ; or he has learned cunning, and moderates his actions. In a few cases, the disease is soon at an end, and it is possible the amendment may be perceived, and the patient restored to his family : *possible*, but not as a general fact, *probable* ; for the patient is seldom seen by those who are judges of his amendment : a few minutes every two or three days seeming to be the maximum of medical attendance in the best circumstances ; and many weeks, or months, passing over in other cases, without the patient being seen by any medical man at all. Too often, the low state, considered but a continuance of the malady in another form, is succeeded by another paroxysm of excitement, and the rest of a miserable life is passed in hopeless alternations between the two.

But by far the most lamentable part of the present system of lunatic houses is, that a residence in



them is detrimental in exact proportion to the favourable nature of the case. For a hopeless lunatic, for a raving madman, for a melancholy wretch who seems neither to see nor to hear, or for an utter idiot, a lunatic asylum is a place which affords all the comfort of which such unfortunate persons are capable. It is a far different place to two-thirds of those who are confined there. The crowd of most of our asylums is made up of odd but harmless individuals, not much more absurd than numbers who are at large. When eccentric habits are growing upon a man who continues to mix in society, they may be checked by his own efforts, on observing the surprise or the amusement which is caused by them. The starts of irritability, and the gloom of discontent, are alike corrected by prudential feelings, or by regard for others, or by the continual interruptions of business or pleasure. In an asylum for lunatics, the eccentric man makes little or no effort to correct his eccentricity; nor the irritable man his irritability; and the man of gloom sits in motionless despondency from morning until night, without the salutary disturbance of duty, or necessary exertion, or the visit of a cheerful friend. To all these patients, confinement is the very reverse of beneficial. It fixes and renders permanent what might have passed away, and ripens eccentricity, or temporary excitement or depression, into actual in-



sanity ;—and this is not the worst part of the evil ; for even when a patient has suffered no aggravation of his disorder during its greatest severity, the danger is not passed : nay, it is increased as his convalescence advances ; for when that otherwise happy change commences, the sights and sounds of a lunatic asylum become, if they were not before, both afflicting and unsalutary. That, during the unconfirmed stage of convalescence, when reason is struggling through the cloud which has obscured it, some *mental* as well as medical treatment is required, is, I presume, what no man will deny, who has really ever thought upon the subject. But can it be applied—is it *possible* that it should be applied—in the generality of cases in our lunatic asylums ? A slight recollection of the circumstances in which a lunatic patient is placed, will furnish a ready answer to the question.

I take the most favourable case for the asylum :—I will suppose a person to have been received into the establishment unconscious of the change,—a thing which happens very rarely. The patient is insensible, and suffers nothing. But this state will not last long. The patient recovers some degree of consciousness ; his vehemence and passion abate ; or a load of despondency and horror begins to be cleared away from him. He tries, very feebly and imperfectly, to recover broken chains of

thought : recollections of past circumstances return to him, as to one awaking from a deep sleep, or from a troubled dream ; perhaps the recollections of his family, of his home, and of suspended affections. Who can paint the surprise and alarm which must naturally arise from the unexplained confusion around him ! Shocked and affrighted, he may relapse into his madness and be lost. Or, if his mind has recovered more power, he may understand that he is surrounded by mad people,—the raving, the abandoned, the miserable ; that his friends have given him up ; that he is written in the list of men degraded from the possession of reason, and that he may continue to be confined for ever. Bewildered in his attempts to remember how long it is since he saw those dear to him ; perhaps left for days without one rational person to whom to express his doubts and fears ; and in his half-recovered state, almost despairing of being ever restored to “the cheerful ways of men,” the chances against his perfect restoration are fearful ; and most powerful causes of returns and aggravations of his mental malady are accumulated upon him.—To say that persons in this state are not left, are not abandoned, is by no means satisfactory to those who have opportunities of knowing how little of the time of the superintendent is, or can be, commonly devoted to the professed objects



of his care, and yet who, like children, demand constant watching and attention. In maladies of the mind, there are many moments when a servant is in no degree a sufficient substitute for the physician.

Let it be recollected that in two-thirds, or, I might say, in four-fifths of the cases of reception, the patient is *not* unconscious of what is done to him. He knows that he is removed, that he is confined with mad people; he knows, or at least he suspects, too, that he is not “in his right mind:”—the effect of this consciousness, such objects being presented to it, is never beneficial. The sensitive and timid, and those who have been accustomed to refined society, thus incur a degree of suffering which materially lessens the hope of recovery: they are in a constant state of dissatisfaction, and often express themselves in the most affecting terms concerning the degradations to which they are subjected by coarse and mean attendants; and feel very keenly the contempt evinced for them on all occasions, whatever they may do or say. I have seen numerous examples of this kind, in which it was evident that although the patients were not yet sufficiently restored to return to their families without superintendence, a continued residence in the asylum was gradually ruining the body and the mind. If, contrary to



all probability, such patients are rescued from the asylum, they retain a most painful recollection of what they have witnessed and undergone ; and I have known this circumstance long continue a source of irritation to a mind which might otherwise have been kept in a state of tranquillity. But how few are happy enough to escape ! After many hopeless years, such patients become so much accustomed to the routine of the house, as to be mere children ; and are content to remain there as they commonly do, until they die.

I have more than once read the announcement of such a death with a feeling approaching to pleasure ; when I have recalled to my mind the monotonous wretchedness of the unhappy patient's existence ; debarred from home, from the sight of friends, from the society of their families ; not permitted, notwithstanding many and moving supplications, ever to behold the still beloved faces of their children—shut out from even a hope of any change that *might* be beneficial to them—and when I have recollected, too, how unwelcome were any representations of the possibility of an individual, though unequal to the cares of a family, being yet capable of social and soothing family enjoyments ; and that, in short, those who had the charge of them, and those who sent them into confinement, were equally immovable in their sentence of confinement for life.

On patients of less feeling, the effect of living constantly among mad men or mad women is a loss of all sensibility and self-respect or care ; or, not unfrequently, a perverse pleasure in adding to the confusion, and diversifying the eccentricity of those about them. Their minds become childish, and their amusements frivolous or mischievous. In both cases the disease grows inveterate. Paroxysms of violence alternate with fits of sullenness ; both are considered further proofs of the hopelessness of the case, and at last all hope is truly enough destroyed.

The chances of life do not offer any condition more dreadful than would be that of a man who, in a state of sound mind, should be condemned to herd exclusively with lunatics. Who, that acknowledges the inequalities of his own mental and moral capacity in different circumstances, and the influence of habits, situation, and associates, on his thoughts and actions, can fail to perceive that in such an unhappy situation the most constant and vigorous exertions of his self-command would be required to resist the horrible influences of the place ;—a place in which a thousand fantasies, that are swept away almost as soon as formed in the healthy atmosphere of diversified society, would assume shapes more distinct ; a place in which the intellectual operations could not but become, from mere want of exercise, more and more inert ; and



the domination of wayward feelings more and more powerful. Yet in this disadvantageous state, a glance into the day-rooms of our lunatic asylums will show us that many individuals are actually placed; many who, though not enjoying a perfect state of reason, are convalescent—are not mad—but are subjected during the mental weakness of their convalescence, to the very circumstances most likely to confuse or destroy the most rational and healthy mind. If any subject deserves serious consideration, it is this.

Convalescence from insanity, like convalescence from a lingering fever, is a state intermediate between disease and health; and very slight circumstances may retard or promote the patient's perfect restoration. They may do so in bodily disorder, but yet more, far more, in disorder of the mind. I am aware that there are practitioners who consider mental efforts of little importance in such cases; but these are chiefly such, as having little experience in other diseases, have taken up the exclusive management of this, with very limited views. The physician well knows the futility of an argument against aiding the restoration of an impaired function, by attempts to excite that function: the cause being bodily, is not opposed to such a practice. Paralysis of an arm is a bodily disorder: the nerve of the arm, the medium



of sensation and volition, may be impaired in its course or at its origin ; and yet we find that nothing aids our medicinal applications more, than the efforts of the patient to move his paralysed limb. It is the same with the mind : the organ of its manifestation is impaired ; but a careful solicitation and direction of the functions of which it remains capable, and of those which convalescence enlarges to us, may contribute most powerfully to the cure. Certain well-timed impressions, sensations, or emotions, may renew the actions upon which mental manifestation depends ; may call the thoughts from what engrosses or misleads them, or extricate the mind from what oppresses it. At this time also, if not throughout the whole conduct of the case, a little well-timed medicine may help to remove a state of the brain, the existence of which impedes just sensation, or prevents the just exercise of the mental functions. Yet the lunatic is perhaps not seen by any medical practitioner ; physic is given or withheld according to the fancy of persons unacquainted with the principles of medicine ; and the management of the mind materially neglected. That these united disadvantages prevent the recovery of patients who *might* recover, cannot be questioned by those who consider on what slight bodily disorder mental disorder may depend, or how great may be the effect of mental impressions,

cautiously applied at favourable intervals. It is sufficient to mention, that patients have died insane whose insanity has been considered by competent professional witnesses to have been kept up, and perhaps originally caused, by long continued constipation, and neglect of the bowels; and that in asylums where great attention is paid to the mind, very unexpected good effects have sometimes been produced by circumstances from which no such effects could have been expected. In one of the reports of the Glasgow Lunatic Asylum, it is mentioned, that a patient, affected with religious melancholy, had made up his mind to destroy himself; and that a short passage from the Scriptures, impressively and kindly spoken to him, not only prevented the commission of suicide at the time, but had the effect of permanently checking the tendency to it. The same dreadful thoughts frequently returned to the patient's mind, but the recollection that no murderer "has eternal life," returned also, and the crime was refrained from. This is not a solitary example, and some will be mentioned in the further course of this inquiry.

I have no wish to exaggerate the disadvantages of lunatic houses; but let any reasonable person ask himself, whether it is at all likely that the cares and attentions, bodily and mental, required by maniacs, and upon which their recovery often depends, *can* be expected in many of the licensed



and unlicensed houses of this country, in which lunatics are kept by persons alike ignorant of all that belongs to medical and to moral treatment; negligent of the bodily health of the patients, excepting when violently disordered, and without capacity to attend to the health of the mind. In addition to this, let any one who has ever seen the interior of a lunatic asylum, consider within himself, what chance there exists that the poor convalescent should, in his hours of recovery, hear the kind of conversation likely to lead him back to wise and happy thought. The presence of a company of lunatics, their incoherent talk, their cries, their moans, their indescribable utterances of all imaginable fancies, or their ungovernable frolics and tumult, can have no salutary effect on a mind just reviving from long depression. There is nothing in such a place to impart strength to the weakened reason, whilst every confused notion must become more confused, among persons and objects embodying every form of confusion and absurdity.

The convalescence from insanity differs from convalescence from common disorders, in being sometimes suddenly and unexpectedly commenced: but it is often very feebly and imperfectly declared. Intermissions of sanity and insanity may be observed, for weeks or for months. Old feelings are seen to be renewed, and suspicions to be allayed; and the



physical as well as the mental state to be changed ; but now and then the feelings are again vacillating, suspicions creep again over the mind, and the physical state indicates a relapse into the mental disorder. Surely a change of treatment is indicated by these characters of the malady : but *all* the patients too generally continue in confinement ; those a little convalescent, and those more decidedly so, but yet retaining some little oddity or peculiarity about them. The amendment, too, may be occasioned, or beyond all question greatly promoted, by circumstances acting on the mind ; by circumstances sometimes slight, and often of a transient nature. The accidental introduction of a new train of ideas may prepare for the complete return of rational ideas. The absurdity of a delusion, which has long been cherished, becomes all at once visible to the patient : up to that time it could not be mentioned without detriment ; now it may be spoken of with good effect : it will now lead to rational conclusions, but until now it was necessary wholly to avoid it, and to draw away the mind, like that of a froward child, to things quite unconnected with its disturbance.

Surrounded by the wretched inmates of a lunatic asylum, or left to his own unassisted exertions, it *must* be that such opportunities are many times neglected and lost ; that such influences are

blighted, and many efforts of a struggling understanding checked or frustrated for ever. The religious despair of a patient in the next apartment, brings back and confirms the religious despondency of his neighbour in this: the passions and violence of those who are parading in the airing grounds revive the passions and raving of those who are becoming more tranquil. The very keepers and superintendents of many such places, cannot but be careless concerning the intrusion of the mad subject on the patient when he is at the worst; and ignorant how to manage it when he is better. That cases, which in the first instance would have admitted of cure, are, in consequence of these things, now and then rendered incurable, cannot be a matter of doubt with those who know, as I well do, how heedlessly and ignorantly certificates of insanity are signed, expressive of the necessity of confinement in such institutions.

It will perhaps be said, that these observations imply a want of acquaintance with what is termed the classification of lunatics, in all the larger asylums. I have taken pains to become acquainted with the best arrangements of this kind. In the larger asylums, and a few of the more respectable lunatic houses, is there any approach to a classification; and it is not always possible to avoid the dependance of the classification on various causes, which take no-



thing from the general objection to allowing lunatics to congregate together. There is sometimes a mere separation of the rich from the poor; or of the noisy from the quiet; or of the paralytic and idiots; or at the best, of convalescents from the rest. Even this care is not common. Not only so long as it is neglected, but so long as one lunatic associates with another lunatic, supposing the cases to be curable, so long must the chances of restoration to sanity be very materially diminished. Convalescents should not even associate with convalescents, except under the strict watching of persons of sound mind: they can hardly assist, and they may retard, the recovery of one another.

Another class of patients for whom a lunatic asylum is a most improper place, consists of those who, in various periods of life, become affected with various degrees of weakness of intellect. The portion of the nervous system, through which intellectual power is manifested, is liable, like those portions on the integrity of which other functions depend, to impairment, either to direct impairment, or to sympathetic injury, in consequence of the disordered state of other organs: the impairment may be temporary, or it may be permanent; and may be compared to a partial paralysis. In this state there is a general imbecility of mind, accompanied with the irritable feelings and hasty and fickle moments which belong to states of



weakness ; but there is little or no extravagance of action, still less is there any thing in the condition of the patient which would make his liberty dangerous, or, if he were properly attended to and watched, even inconvenient to others or to himself. This infirmity of mind is common in old persons, but may come on at earlier periods, even in men of cultivated understanding and active habits : and as it is then seldom complete ; as it is in all cases diversified by intervals of returning consciousness and temporary alacrity ; and as, except when the effect of age, it may be altogether overcome ;—it is very evident, that the confinement of persons so affected with mere lunatics, is the most likely thing both to afflict them, and to shut out every hope of restoration to mental strength. Nothing can be more lamentable than to observe the unconcern with which individuals, who have thus become incapacitated for the active duties of life, are sometimes abandoned by their relations ; and though not unfitted to enjoy many alleviations of their grievous affliction, debarred from them by the necessary rules of an establishment to which they ought never to have been sent.

That many private interests are concerned in the present arrangements, that the complete separation of even the curable lunatics would often be difficult, or sometimes quite impracticable, does not affect the principle I am advocating. Whatever may be said, no one in his senses will believe, that a man

whose mind is disordered, is likely in any stage of his disorder to derive benefit from being surrounded by men whose mental faculties are obscured, whose passions and affections are perverted, and who present to him, in the place of models of sound mind, in the place of rational and kind associates, in the place of reasonable and judicious conversation, every various specimen of folly, of melancholy, and of extravagant madness.

I am well acquainted with the guardians of several lunatic houses, who are men of intelligence and of great humanity, but it is impossible for them, under the present system, to prevent many of these evils from being incurred in their own establishments. They may point to the spaciousness of their grounds, to the variety of occupations and amusements prepared for their patients; to the excellence of their food and the conveniencies of their lodging; and urge that as little restraint is employed as is compatible with their safety: but the fault of the association of lunatics with each other, and the infrequency of any communication between the patient and persons of sound mind, mars the whole of the design. The present system originated in erroneous views of mental disorders, and has been perpetuated with such views. Accident, and the vigilance of the public, have exposed and remedied great enormities; but serious evils remain. Lunatics have continued, in many private establishments,



to be nearly wholly excluded from observation ; and particularly from the observation of those a part of whose future duty it might be to treat the disorders of such patients. It will not be until many present arrangements are reformed, and mental disorders are more carefully studied, and lunatics are no longer confined with lunatics, that it can be seen how far we are enabled to control the most dreadful malady to which the nature of man is exposed. So long as the present arrangements are permitted, it will be found, in addition to the disadvantages immediately arising out of them, that the dread of having a relation marked off as wholly irrational, the great responsibility incurred by endeavouring to prove the lunacy of individuals possessed of property, the just prejudices existing against lunatic asylums, and the heavy expense which attends the care of the insane, will continue to prevent a proper restraint being imposed on many individuals, who, though not wholly irrational, and not fit subjects for deprivation of property and for imprisonment, are yet, on certain points, so indubitably of unsound mind, as to cause great and constant uneasiness in their families ; or who are liable to such attacks of temporary excitement or other derangement of mind, as to be *not always* in a state to take care of their own money. I am acquainted at this time, with instances in which these unavoidable difficulties produce much distress and anxiety,



but in which, so long as the question is between liberty and complete restraint, no medical man will venture to interfere.

These views and statements, which have arisen out of some experience and reflection on the subject, will, I think, be borne out by the illustrations which follow. In the concluding chapter of this publication, I have given an outline of a plan by which many or all of the evils I have noticed may perhaps be avoided, and every desired advantage gained. But the first object is to attract attention to the proper study of the mind, and of its various infirmities and diseases.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE CONSTITUTION OF THE HUMAN UNDERSTANDING.

ONE of the most interesting objects of an inquiry concerning the indications of Insanity, is to arrive at certain information applicable to cases in which individuals are supposed to be of unsound mind ; in order that we may ascertain whether or not such a supposition be well founded. In numerous cases, this is not a task of any difficulty. Certain peculiarities of appearance, and manner, and language ; the wildness, the depression, or the extravagance of the individual, leave no room for doubt. Cases of greater obscurity occur, in which the derangement of mind does not manifest itself by continued irregularity of conduct, or by any strong external expression ; or in which it is perhaps displayed in one or two opinions only, or in which it is accompanied with the power and the desire on the part of the lunatic to deceive those about him. The perplexity which attends even cases of this kind, has, I think, been exaggerated : it is at least certain, that it has been so dwelt upon, considered as imposing such a heavy responsibility on the medical practitioner, as to cause very well informed men too often to rely, on such occasions, on those



whose only qualification for decision was the assumption of a peculiar penetration with respect to such cases. In the mean time, the most important question, and that which really involves the practitioner in serious responsibility, has often been overlooked. The task of determining the actual departure of the patient's mind from a perfectly sound state, scarcely implies the infliction of a greater share of anxiety on the person required to make the determination, than is implied by the doubtful existence of any other obscure malady concerning which he is consulted: it is the peculiar mode of treatment habitually adopted, when once such departure is declared, with little reference to the nature and form of the departure, which associates this part of practice with all that can cause hesitation and alarm in the physician's mind.

The far more important, but not more difficult duty of the practitioner is, for the most part, neglected,—that of considering, with all the caution which such a serious case requires, *whether or not the departure from sound mind be of a nature to justify the confinement of the individual, and the imposition of restraint upon him, as regards the use or disposal of his property.* This is the great and important question which has occasioned, in so many instances, so much public dissatisfaction; has so often caused legal inquiries to be instituted; and led to so many and such unsuccessful attempts

on the part of medical authorities to lay down some line or boundary plainly distinguishing insanity from sound mind.

Yet it appears to me, that by giving a due consideration to the intellectual constituents of what is called sound mind, and by taking an enlarged view of its varieties ; we shall find, on coming to the examination of cases of undoubted insanity, that the departures from sound mind may generally, if not always, be recognized ; and that the second and most essential part of the practitioner's duty, that of determining concerning the liberty or restraint of each individual affected with insanity, lies within narrower limits than he has been led to suppose. But it is indispensable that the practitioner prepare for this duty, as for his other practical duties, by careful study of the subject ; and this, I think, he has too much neglected.

As a knowledge of the natural structure and functions of the body prepares him to detect impairment of either, so should he be prepared for the detection and management of diseases affecting the mental functions, by a previous acquaintance with the natural constitution of a healthy mind. Among the subjects comprehended in the studies of zoology and human physiology, this has seldom attracted a due, because a useful, share of attention ; although the phenomena and the order of phenomena present no greater difficulties in the way of observa-



tion than those which he is accustomed to in his study of the functions of respiration, circulation, digestion, or reproduction; and are in no degree *more* hidden and mysterious even in their nature, though certainly not less so. I pass over all considerations of the peculiar interest of a study which relates to the most elevated portion of our constitution. I might say with Locke, that "since it is the understanding that sets man above the rest of sensible beings, and gives him all the advantage and dominion which he has over them; it is certainly a subject, even for its nobleness, worth our labour to inquire into." Medical men have anxious practical duties, more pressing than any claims of mere mental gratification, and must make their studies subservient to them: but this may with truth be said, that the study of man's understanding requires to be pursued to a certain extent, to enable medical practitioners to perform an important part of their practical duties with credit. Even experience, supposing that they had opportunities of acquiring it, which they have not, would merely impart to them a little practical dexterity, very limited, and very likely to fail them in the greatest need: it is the acquisition of principles of practice which can alone prepare them for the various, the sudden, and the alarming phenomena which demand their attention in this department of medicine. Without such principles, the cure of lunatics may

indeed be professed as a trade, and a profitable trade; but whoever aspires to any thing like certainty of diagnosis, or to an enlightened treatment of insanity, must at least make it no less the subject of careful study than disorder of any other part of the human economy.

Let us proceed then, first, to consider, very briefly, what meaning we attach to the idea of the mind. In adventuring on a subject so difficult, and so wrapt in real or artificial obscurity, I shall confine myself to those parts of it which have a close connexion with professional study and professional duty. Endeavouring to avoid, on the one hand, disquisitions on the various modes of exercising the same faculty; or, on the other, resolving all the modes of mental action into varieties of one; I shall restrict my remarks to such mental actions as are the most separate and plain, those which all men may perceive in themselves, and which, in morbid states of mind, are visibly affected in degrees which indicate their distinctness. To refer medical practitioners, generally, to the metaphysicians, is to refer them to authors whose elaborate and valuable works they have no leisure to peruse with the attention required for understanding them; and although the study of the Philosophy of the Human Mind might very advantageously be added to the general studies of those destined for our profession, I should have no reason in the present day to



expect that my views of the departures from sound mind would attract any attention from those who are most interested in their study, if an attempt were not made to place before them, in a few pages, an intelligible statement of its healthy functions and natural modes of action. The necessity of the attempt will, I trust, therefore, excuse its apparent presumption with those to whom the subject is familiar, and by whom it will be seen that my chief anxiety has been to avoid whatever could throw obscurity on facts requiring to be remembered ; and, as one consequence, to make use of the simplest terms, and those least open to dispute. I am not unmindful that of all subjects, this is one which most “branches out into infinity,” and that here, if in any pursuit, “it is the nature of our particular scheme, and the single point of view in which we consider it, which ought to put a stop to our researches.”\* Yet those who would really be master of the whole subject of mental impairment and error, must take a wider survey of the functions of the mind, must study both its peculiar philosophy and the philosophy of morals, or that of human action, subjects of great interest, and closely connected, but both of which have hitherto attracted an inadequate share of attention in the schools of England.

\* Burke.

Observation of what passes in ourselves and in others, shows us that man derives his principal knowledge of the things around him from the exercise of certain senses, by means of which his mind becomes impressed with the ideas of certain properties, existing, or deemed to exist, in surrounding objects. These senses are so ordered as not merely to contribute to the preservation, but to the enjoyment of the individual: and so long as they are in a healthy state, he receives such impressions of form, colour, number, distance, consistence, dryness or moisture, temperature, sound, odour, flavour, &c., through the medium of what are called the Five Senses, as agree with the common experience of these impressions in the generality of mankind; and accompanied with such emotions of pleasure, or of uneasiness or pain, as the generality of mankind derive through them.

Each of the sensations excites that state of the mind which is called Attention; that is, each excites a momentary attention; but if we continue to attend to the sensation, the act of so doing is voluntary, either arising from a wish to prolong a sensation which is agreeable, or to understand it, in consequence of a desire, which seems to be very early developed in the human mind, of learning the nature of the things which affect it. We can direct our attention to a sensation, or withdraw it; we can direct it to one of many sensations arising at the



same time from one object, to the smell of a rose, or to its colour, or to the arrangement of the petals; to the smell of a cyst of musk, or to its globular form, or the nature of its strong and bristly covering; to the spires of a distant city, or to the variegated beauty of the intermediate plain; to the lowing of cattle in the pastures, or the tinkling of a sheep-bell, or the sound of carriage wheels advancing or dying upon the ear. We can attend to each of these separately, and to each alternately, according to our inclination.

When the impressions of any sense have been experienced, we find that we have the wonderful power of recalling both the impression made by the sensation, and by the object which excited it, in the absence of such object. The rose, the musk, the landscape, are recalled with all the sensations belonging to them, although no rose, no musk, no landscape, is before us.

When, instead of merely recalling past objects and sensations, we receive new impressions from other objects, and sensations either resembling those experienced before, or differing from them; we can pay an alternate attention to the new sensations, and to those which we can recall to our minds, just as we could to those presented at one time to us. This alternate attention constitutes Comparison.

By means of this alternate attention to objects and sensations present at the same time, or to

objects and sensations some of which are present and others recalled, we perceive, first, the particulars in which the present objects and sensations resemble the former objects and sensations; and by a further alternate attention, or comparison, the particulars in which they differ from each other. The same alternate attention leaves no doubt in the mind of the distinctness of the objects and sensations which are present, from the objects and sensations which are recalled.

This alternate attention, or comparison, consequently produces a decision, or an opinion, or judgment, concerning the relative nature or degree of all objects and all sensations, present or recalled. This decision, or opinion, or judgment, when exercised, as it commonly is, concerning the relative power of objects or impressions to produce pleasure or pain, is productive of choice, or preference, or desire. If we compare a building which is before us with one formerly seen, the form and size of which are recalled, we are led to perceive that one is larger, or finer, or more convenient than the other, and decide, or judge, or form an opinion to that effect; and if we have to choose between them, we choose that which our opinion or judgment, founded on the comparison, has decided to be the most convenient, or the most likely to be agreeable or pleasurable to us. Both the subjects of comparison may be absent. When we are asked



whether a piece of metal or a piece of cloth, heated to the same temperature, would convey the greatest sensation of heat to the hand, we recall the sensations we have experienced from each of these substances in similar circumstances of exposure to heat; and compare them one with another, by which comparison we are led to the decision that the metal communicates the greatest heat of the two, although we have never made the comparison before. Or the opinion, decision, or judgment, may be exercised concerning the truth of other decisions, opinions, or judgments. When we read a book, we attend to the words and ideas in the page before us; and rapidly recalling the ideas previously acquired on the subject from other books, or from our own experience, and alternately attending to each, or comparing them, we form, as we read, a succession of decisions, opinions, or judgments; sometimes deciding that our former ideas were correct, sometimes discarding them for others of which the truth seems better established.

In these operations, we observe, then, the offices of Sensation, Attention, Comparison, and Memory, with a limited exercise of the Imagination; the act of recalling impressions with the objects which first excited them seeming to be conjointly performed by this faculty and the memory.

But, if we attend to what passes in our own

minds in almost every instant of our lives, we shall perceive, that not only do the memory and imagination, in conjunction, revive past impressions in connexion with the objects with which they were first presented to the attention; but can continue to revive, and are continually recalling successive images in a long associated series; and that this operation is performed very often without an evident desire of our own, or involuntarily. On any object, or image, or impression, is revived, or recalled, or suggested, after another, in consequence of the slightest bonds of resemblance, contrast, or other connexion. The image with which the chain commences may be an external object acting on the sense, or an internal recollection, or the memory or imagination of any object formerly the subject of sensation.

Over these chains of thought we can still exercise some power: we can direct their revival, by voluntary effort, according to the order in which the first impressions were made; we can retain some links of the chain, dwell upon them, abandon them at will. Or we can give indulgence to the imagination, which then exerts unlimited power over them, disconnecting and uniting the several links in an infinite number of series.

In these processes we see, then, what appears to be a conjoint office of the memory and imagination, which has been sometimes called the Association of



Ideas. We see also another operation, in which, if the Memory has still some part, the Imagination takes a very preponderating share.

It is this faculty of Imagination, which, being to so great an extent independent of the will, (and, although truly relying on the memory for the materials with which it works, hardly acknowledging the obligation,) is so peculiarly exerted, after the manner, we might almost say, of other involuntary functions, though less usefully and less necessarily, and therefore less constantly, during the state of sleep. Sleep, it is well known, may be more or less profound: sometimes the memory is partially awake, and sometimes the senses are not wholly in inaction; but it most commonly is observed that when the external senses are closed to all common impressions, and all the forms of attention are in repose, and the power of the memory is at least questionable, the Imagination still revives the thousands of buried but indestructible chains of ideas which are mysteriously treasured in the brain, and weaves them into endless combinations. The events of childhood, the scenery of other lands, the faces of friends distant, or dead, or estranged, come again before us; and representations of circumstances of which we have had no living experience are mingled with these images in inexhaustible variety. But as during this state we cannot command our attention, we can therefore

exercise no comparison ; we cannot reflect, we cannot form no correct judgment, can exercise no self-control ; and we act inconsistently with the imaginary scene into which the unsleeping imagination has transported us, or evince no surprise at the most unlikely combinations of places and persons, or experience undue impressions, immoderate anger, unreasonable fear, or pleasure as excessive as it is transient and unsubstantial.—“ I had once in a dream,” Johnson remarked to his friend and biographer, Boswell, “ a contest of wit with some other person, and was very much mortified by imagining that my opponent had the better of me. Now,” said he, “ one may mark here the effect of sleep in weakening the power of reflection ; for had not my judgment failed me, I should have seen that the wit of this supposed antagonist, by whose superiority I felt myself depressed, was as much furnished by me, as that which I thought I had been uttering in my own person.” What Johnson called reflection in this observation, is one of the forms of attention ; it is close and continued attention, and when alternately occupied on two particulars, leads to a judgment, as we have seen concerning them. In Johnson’s mind during sleep there were no sensations of himself and his existence to be compared with the imaginary suggestions, and consequently there was no comparison and no correct judgment.



I am anxious to avoid any observation not intimately connected with the subsequent parts of this inquiry; but it may be here remarked, that other modes of attention have received other appellations and produce other effects. When *simple* ideas have been received, in the only way in which they can be received, by the senses, we can combine two or more of them into one, which is then a *complex* idea: and we may combine complex ideas in the same manner to form other complex ideas. The whiteness, the fragrance, the elegant form of a lily, are each in the mind simple ideas, received by the senses of sight and smell; their union forms the idea of a lily, a complex idea. The complex idea of a lily, with the ideas of roses, jessamines, jonquils, and other flowers, all complex ideas, forms the complex idea of a flower-garden. To attend to the separate ideas of which a complex idea is formed, is to perform the process of *analysis*. To attend to one property separately, as fragrance, is to *abstract* it from the rest, and the grouping of abstractions is *generalization*. I can consider the fragrance of each flower separately, and the idea of fragrance, which results from that operation, is a *general* idea.

These processes are every hour performed by every mind: it is only the terms which are unfamiliar even to those who have never thought of this subject before. We attend to one particular property or quality of a thing, and we class not

only external objects, but impressions and emotions together, in this way, continually, whether these are observed, or recalled by the memory, and according to their resemblances in some one quality or property : we do this simply by exercising that alternate attention, which has been spoken of as constituting comparison, and the results are abstractions, which we afterwards collect together, or generalise. Snow is white, a lily is white, writing paper is white, the sulphate of quinine is white, magnesia is white ; and when we attend to the whiteness of these objects, separately from their other properties, we *abstract* the idea of whiteness from the rest : and by considering this property as belonging to all these objects, we form the *general* idea of whiteness. Thus are formed also, from the idea of what is good, or useful, or beautiful in many objects, abstractedly regarded from other properties, the general ideas of goodness, and of utility, and of beauty. The student of medicine is continually collecting simple ideas into one, thus forming complex ideas ; and again resolving complex ideas into those which compose them, or analysing them. In his chemical studies he is occupied with the ideas of gold, of silver, of lead, each a complex idea. He applies the term gold to express the complex idea of a heavy, yellow, ductile and malleable metal ; the term silver to a white metal, also malleable and ductile, and heavy, but in propor-



tions differing from those of gold; the term lead, to a blueish grey metal, also ductile, and malleable, and heavy, but in proportions differing from the ductility, malleability, and weight, of silver, and of gold. The ideas, then, of a certain colour and weight, and certain degrees of ductility, malleability, &c., are the ideas collectively expressed by the terms gold, silver, and lead. The idea of a metal is of course itself a complex idea, and conveys to the chemist, who has analysed the simple ideas which compose it, the complex idea of a body generally remarkable for its specific gravity, lustre, opacity, the property of reflecting light, &c. &c.;—the knowledge of all these separate properties having been separately acquired. It will at once be seen by any one, however unused to this kind of examination of his thoughts, that our complex ideas are exceedingly numerous; and that the convenience of them,—as they can be used with as much readiness and rapidity as a simple idea, and involve so many simple ideas,—must be extremely great. By the consideration of certain properties, considered separately or abstractedly from other properties, the naturalist forms his generalizations; divides the multitudinous productions of nature into a few kingdoms, and each of these kingdoms into classes, and each class into genera and species. Similar attempts have been made, but with less success, to effect an exact ar-

rangement of the endless interminglings of the symptoms of diseases. Inflammation is a complex idea ; consisting, according to accepted definitions, of a few general ideas ; as of pain, heat, redness, swelling ; each of these again being formed by the consideration of the qualities of pain, or of heat, or of redness, or of swelling, separately or abstractedly from the various situations and circumstances in which they may separately occur, and without any connexion with each other.

These processes are evidently promoted or facilitated by the use of various artificial signs, including the use of words, or language. In fact, we could not stir a step without such signs. The examples which have just been given may be referred to, as showing that we are enabled, by the use of a term applied to a collection of ideas, to refer to the collection with as much readiness and exactness of meaning, as to any one of the simple ideas which compose it. The sign, or term, or word, affixed to the complex idea, is the means, and the only means, of holding its elements together. A correct and full use of terms is best acquired by those who are best acquainted with the ideas they are capable of expressing : but the employment of these terms or signs, reflects, as it were, the greatest facilities for studying the ideas of which they are the signs. In order fully to avail ourselves of their help, it is necessary to be more



precise in their use and application than men commonly are ; for we continually employ terms, familiar to us from childhood, of which we have never examined the meaning. When we begin to study any science, we immediately feel the necessity for being more exact in the use of words or terms, and perceive the advantage that is derived from them. So indispensable are they, that it is difficult, as has been remarked,\* to imagine any exercise of mind, except that of the mere reception of a sensation, without the use of some name, or word, or sign.

There are also natural signs in the voice, indicative of different emotions ; and there is the natural action or gesticulation, which is always very expressive. Of these it is not required that I should speak further than to observe, that the use of the artificial signs is always, and of the natural signs often, a result of our will to use them ;—that each character of mind has its peculiar signs, from the natural ones in the countenance, to the artificial signs existing in the style or manner of conversation, or expression of thought in writing ; —that when the mind is in any way impaired, the impairment is accompanied, and often much indicated, by a modification or impairment of the

\* Condillac.

natural, or of the artificial signs, or of both ;— and, as the use of signs, natural and artificial, besides the advantage already mentioned, confers on men all the distinction and all the advantages of communicating their ideas to other men ; and of recording them, and leaving them as memorials to guide others to other ideas ; this modification or impairment is felt as a direct disadvantage, and reflects further difficulty in the way of the right exercise of the understanding.

The power of effecting all the operations or processes which have been mentioned, is an essential part of sound and healthy mind ; and those which have been spoken of last in order plainly depend upon the exercise of those which were previously mentioned ; upon the exercise of attention, and particularly of alternate attention, or comparison, on things present to the senses ; or on things absent and recalled by the memory and imagination ; or on things, some of which are present, and others absent. The faculties, if we may so call them without becoming involved in dispute, of attention, memory, imagination, and comparison, are the great attributes of the human understanding ; of which, existing in perfection, the results are, various acquirements, correct opinions, sound judgments, wise determinations, and reasonable actions. Reasoning is no-



thing more than their successive or continued exercise; and what we call reason is but the product of this exercise.

All the sensations which have yet been mentioned are received by the fine extremities of the nerves, distributed to the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue and palate, the external surface, and thence conveyed along the nervous chords to the brain. The sensations received by the nerves of the external surface are commonly, although incorrectly, spoken of as one sense, the sense of touch. There are also various sensations arising from internal surfaces, as hunger, thirst, &c., and others which are chiefly combined in health into a general feeling of the well-being of the whole system; but which suffer marked interruption in states of privation or fatigue, or in disease, when commonly new sensations are developed, as of weariness, sadness, numbness, or bodily pain, which are not referrible to any of the five senses commonly so called. When the body and mind are in health, no uneasy sensations are conveyed, or perceived to arise either from the internal or external senses.

I have said that the sensations arising from present objects, and also our recollections of them, give us pleasure or pain. The pleasure or the pain thence arising are evidently distinct from the intellectual faculties, and equally distinct from common

corporeal pain or pleasure. We may call the pleasure and pain, sensations, or emotions, or modifications of sensation: they are effected by certain influences operating on the nervous system in a manner we cannot explain, any more than we can explain the manner in which external objects produce on one set of nerves impressions of colour, and on another set of nerves impressions of sound.—But the association which is formed between certain objects and certain ideas of pleasure and pain becomes the source of all the vast play of the affections; each affection being in reality in the first instance founded upon emotions of pleasure or emotions of pain, and ever afterwards guided by a judgment or opinion effected by the exercise of the intellectual faculties. It is a part of our nature to desire pleasure and to shun pain. If we desire life, action mental and corporeal, social intercourse, knowledge, power, the affection and esteem of those around us, all these are so many things which we consider productive of pleasure: whereas death, inaction, solitude, ignorance, insignificance, are so many privations of pleasure, and approaches to what is painful.

As Emotion may be called a modification of sensation, and as every emotion is attended with more or less pleasure or pain, so Affection, in its full sense, is the attachment felt to those objects of sensation or emotion which we either know or



believe to be capable of giving pleasure, or the aversion felt for objects which we know or believe to be capable of giving pain. Passion is merely the vehemence with which we feel sensations or emotions, or with which we conceive desire and affection in the sense in which they have been just described. The Will to act springs immediately from the sensations, the emotions, and the affections ; from one only, or from more than one. It is a property or faculty of our being, distinct from the understanding, but evidently not independent of it ; and in a well-regulated constitution it is governed by it.

The judgment or opinion which governs our affections being sometimes formed early, we forget the process of its formation, and mark only the association which is the result : as we walk or dance without remembering the successive efforts which alone enabled us to do so in the first instance ; or as we employ appropriate words when we wish to express our thoughts, without recollecting the long process by which the association of words with thoughts was first formed. A child is sensible of the care and attention bestowed upon it by its nurse, or by its parents ; and as the care and attention are sources of pleasure, the child conceives attachment to the nurse or parent ; but the affection, when once created, often survives its causes. The cares and attentions of others pro-

duce similar effects, and we feel a degree of affection for, or alienation from, various individuals, according to the judgment we form of their wish to benefit or injure us ; exercising that judgment, or in other words, exercising our attention, upon certain of their words, looks, and actions ; and comparing them with other words, looks, and actions, which we have formerly found to attend certain good or evil dispositions towards us. The judgment is often erroneous, but the result is always the same. The sensations of pleasure or pain become connected with the appearances of the objects which have once been experienced by us to produce them : fire with the sensation of the pain of a burn ; the sight of a well prepared repast with the pleasures of a convivial feast ; a labelled phial with the nauseous taste of medicine ; or a smiling face with the pleasures arising from friendship. Our judgment of these things still depends on our sensations, our attention, and our comparison : a painted fire, the mere representation of a repast, or the appearance and label of a phial, containing what is not nauseous, or the smiling face of an insincere person, may deceive those who have not examined the appearances sufficiently to perceive and know that they are delusive. But in either case, the decision, and the consequent actions, are determined by the judgment we have formed ; and are correct or incorrect, wise or



foolish, just as the judgments are correct or incorrect, or wise or foolish, on which they depend.

A man whose organs of sense invariably conveyed to him just and equal impressions; who at all times possessed the power of commanding his attention, of directing it to any object, or withholding it; and was gifted with active and unerring senses, to provide that attention with objects; a man whose memory was tenacious and faithful;—whose imagination was active, and to a great degree controllable by his will, under the direction of his understanding, or by his determination of what was its useful exercise; who could at the same time exert an accurate alternate attention to things present and past, to objects before him, and the impressions left in his mind by former objects, so as to note every true resemblance, and detect every difference;—such a man could not fail to possess a correct judgment: and if these faculties were exerted no less on the objects of affection or passion than on physical objects and their impressions, and he had the power to regulate each affection and consequent action according to the dictates of his judgment, and the expression of every thought as his wisdom would dictate to be done; he would possess a perfect mind.

He would be able to attend in succession to every branch of learning, and to every art and science, and to acquire in all a proficiency. There

would be no limit to his power except the limit of life. Whatever he attended to would be remembered : his memory and imagination would furnish materials for accurate comparison with the subjects upon which his no less accurate senses were occupied, and his conclusions would be unfailingly just. Reasoning correctly concerning the tendency of every emotion and action, he would regulate every emotion and every action. His understanding would always speak more authoritatively to his will than his passions would speak. The real end and result of every mode of action being distinctly seen by him, he would never fall into modes of action of which the end or result would be painful or inconvenient. In the management of all his faculties, and of all the worldly affairs in which birth, accident, or his intellectual power and exertion might place him, his prudence would be at all times vigilant, and his success certain. Reading the revealed intentions of his Creator in the phenomena of the natural world, he would have strength and self-command sufficient to conform to their evident direction towards the happiness of all; and in his duty to his family, to his neighbours, to his country, to mankind, and to his God, he would be at all times exact and without fault:—he would be perfectly wise, and therefore perfectly virtuous.

But in the wisest and best of human beings we behold but a shadow of perfection ; and the affairs



of the world are necessarily carried on by men few of whom make a near advance to the reality; whilst the degrees in which either all or some of the intellectual faculties approach to the highest which seems to be compatible with our present state of existence are very numerous; and are shown conspicuously enough by the great diversity of attainments and self-control possessed by different individuals; the best being yet subject to much inconsistency and weakness, to recover or escape from the effects of which forms a large part of what we ordinarily call human wisdom.

We observe these degrees of excellence no less in the moral than in the mental varieties: to form an estimate of the superiority of any one individual in either, it is necessary to consider the age to which he has attained; and in attributing superiority to any one in a moral point of view, it is further necessary not only to regard the apparently equal tenor of his life, but to be acquainted with the degree in which he is capable of those modifications of sensation to which we give the name of emotions, passions, or affections; and with the opportunities he has enjoyed of acquiring mental cultivation; as it is evident that a man can have no merit for controlling, or for not yielding to emotions, passions, or affections, which he never felt; or which he has never learnt to look upon as things which ought to be controlled. It is possible that a man whose

conduct is less equal and less externally correct may in reality be exercising a greater control over himself, or engaged in a more conscientious struggle, than one whose life as to external acts is blameless : and strict justice requires that the praise of self-command should not be awarded to what may be the mere result of apathy, of feelings undeveloped, or of feelings deadened by physical infirmity or age. The perfect man we have imagined, is one whose emotions, passions, and affections are unimpaired, but who governs them and directs them to good ends. He sees what is best, and he pursues it. His virtue is Wisdom in Action.

This self-government is intimately connected with the perfection of the intellectual faculties ; and although these also are liable to disorder and defect by disease or age, it is happily ordained that habit often maintains in those of virtuous lives a blameless conduct even when the vigour of the understanding has suffered natural impairment.



## CHAPTER IV.

THE VARIOUS DEGREES OF PERFECTION IN WHICH THE FACULTIES OF THE UNDERSTANDING ARE POSSESSED BY DIFFERENT INDIVIDUALS.

WE are taught by the comparative anatomy of man and of the lower animals, that the superior endowments of different orders of the animal creation are connected with certain peculiarities or additions of nervous structure. Certain endowments being imparted to each species of animal, the manifestation of the endowment, in each individual of the species, depends on the development of certain portions of nervous substance in the individual. As we ascend in the scale, independent of other differences, the brain acquires more and more development and complication; and it is so far from necessary to attempt to prove, that it would be most unphilosophical to doubt, that it is the organ of the manifestation of thought. That it is the central seat of sensation and of the will, both of which are transmitted by nervous prolongations, seems to be equally well established. That it is also the temple of the emotions, passions, and affections, is highly probable, though not very easily proved.

Supposing every individual, at the first moment of existence, to be endowed by the Deity with an

equal gift of mind, which is not, I think, a matter admitting of dispute ; the manifestation of the mind must depend upon, and be modified by the development of the brain in each individual. The same intellectual light may be given to all ; but in some obscured by a gross organization, and in others, more happily organized, shining forth more brightly. Itself out of the reach of physical injury, it works by physical instruments ; and the exactness of its operations depends on the growth, maturity, integrity, and vigour of its instruments, which are the brain and nervous system. If the nervous agents of sensation are unfaithful, the mind receives false intelligence, or transmits its orders by imbecile messengers : if the seat of thought, the centre of intellectual and moral government, is faultily arranged, the operations of the understanding are impeded and incomplete.

Nay, so dependent is the immaterial soul upon the material organs, both for what it receives and what it transmits, that a slight disorder in the circulation of the blood through different portions of nervous substance, can disturb all sensation, all emotion, all relation with the external and the living world ; can obstruct attention and comparison, can injure and confound the accumulations in the memory, or modify the suggestions of imagination.

When the brain is not originally defective, and has suffered no injury from disease or otherwise,



we observe an adaptation of the manifestations of mind of which it is capable to the age of the individual. Infancy and our declining years are meant to be equally exempt from struggle and exertion; and the activity, the business, and the cares of life, are allotted to adult and middle age. The brain slowly acquires its proper development; for although its rudiments are early formed, its structure is not completed in general before the age of seven, and in many cases not for some years afterwards. The intellectual existence of a child is at first limited to sensations, which are followed by those actions which appear, even in the human species, to be what are termed instinctive. The power of attention, although in a very limited degree, is soon super-added: when this acquires more strength, we observe unquestionable proofs of memory; and during this progress, the child is evidently learning to use its senses, as plainly as it is learning to use the muscles of voluntary motion. The early efforts of an infant to direct the movements of its hands, are not more imperfect than its efforts to feel, and hear, and see accurately; and sensation, which is at first general, slowly becomes particular and distinct. The information acquired by one sense, aids, or enlarges, or corrects the information given by another sense. The sense of touch corrects many primary errors of the sense of sight; and the sense of sight gives accuracy to the conclusions founded

apparently on sensations conveyed to the ear alone. The child learns to recognise resemblances, and to detect differences ; particular objects become associated with remembered sensations ; it expresses pleasure when those to whose faces it is accustomed approach it, and aversion to unknown features : the sensations of touch, and of sight, and of hearing, materially assist each other, and day by day the child's knowledge of external objects becomes more exact ; so that by the time it can move, this knowledge has become a source of protection, which is what nature intends it to be at this early age. Beyond this first use, a far wider is gradually opened : the sure exercise of the senses produces pleasurable sensation ; their consequent activity of exercise, makes the child acquainted with the external characters of all the objects by which it is surrounded : it delights in recognising resemblances, it cannot avoid remarking differences, and the memory and imagination becoming active, its constant comparisons begin to lay the foundations of opinions and judgment.

If these circumstances had not been overlooked, many a child would have been preserved from attempts to excite intellectual actions of which it was physically incapable ; attempts as irrational as would be attempts to excite a child to the labours of a man, and no less unfortunate in their effects. Deprived of proper bodily exercise,



confined to an uninvigorating atmosphere, and excited to great exertion of the brain, the frequent consequences have been not only an impairment of bodily strength, a loss of physical energy, but a weakened and irritated nervous system, irregular exertions, and subsequent disturbance of mind.

If the gradual growth and order of development of the faculties of the mind had been thought worthy of consideration, we should not have remarked, in so many countries, but more than all in our own, the perpetuation of systems of education, shutting out from the youthful student all the objects on which it is in early life happiness for the senses and attention to be exercised, and calling upon him for tasks and performances which are as irksome as they are injudicious ; for exertions of memory which do not add to the stores of wisdom ; and acts of comparison, which neither inform the understanding nor improve the heart. But it has most unaccountably happened, that the mind has seldom been studied in connection with the two great objects of aiding its development, (or rather of availing ourselves of it,) by a properly ordered education ; and of preventing or relieving the disorders to which it is subject.

When adult age is attained, and the mind of the individual has acquired all the power it will ever acquire, except what results from continued exer-

cise, the power in different individuals, compatible with sound mind, is yet extremely various.

And first, of the senses; the delicacy and accuracy of which must always greatly modify the information received, and the performances executed under the direction of the otherwise best constructed mind. The diversity in this particular is partly natural, and partly acquired. Without some degree of natural perfection, the sense of what is graceful and beautiful would be shut out from any man, and no rules of art could compensate for the defect. On the other hand, the habitual occupations of the artist greatly improve and refine his senses of sight and touch. He sees what common eyes do not see, and he describes with his pencil what common hands cannot describe. Without an accurate sense of hearing, no one can be a good musician; but the practised musician has an appreciation of delicate sounds very different from that which is made by common ears. He acquires also, no less than the artificer or the juggler, a degree of dexterity in the exercise of particular muscles, which strikes the observer as more remarkable, because not so common as the dexterity exhibited in dancing or in the common exercise of walking. Unless the muscles are as obedient as the senses are exact, any degree of perfection in these performances is unattainable: but if there is



a natural acuteness of sense, combined with flexibility and obedience of muscular fibre, practice or education does the rest. The acuteness of the senses may be thus exceedingly increased ; and we have many examples of the increase of one sense in persons whose mode of life has required such an increase for purposes of protection. An experienced seaman readily distinguishes ships from each other, the size of which to the eyes of a landsman appears the same : many sailors distinguish with the greatest ease every ship in the navy, between which the landsman only sees any very obvious differences of size or of rigging. The explanation is, that the seaman's sense of sight is practised, his attention is given to its objects, and he detects minute variations of the form or in the setting of the sails, which give a character to every ship ; and which character he reads with as much facility as men read the features of the face. Among the common people of an agricultural country, we continually meet with persons in whose opinion on general subjects we should be very little inclined to confide ; but who are the most accurate judges of those circumstances of figure and external appearance which indicate the excellence of a horse, or an ox, or a dog, subjects upon which their senses and attention have been carefully exerted under the stimulus of expected profit. In situations to which the people of highly civilized countries are seldom exposed,

the senses acquire an extraordinary acuteness. The Indians of North America, with whom, as with man everywhere in his savage state, the chief business of life is to preserve it, can follow their friends, or track their flying enemies or their prey, over deserts, and through vast and pathless forests, where to an European eye no trace appears of the foot of man or beast; and they effect this by a perception of certain marks, which only senses and attention the most highly exercised could appreciate. The wandering Arab sees the distant caravan of the sandy desert many hours before his European companion can perceive it, and long before it is actually met. The Hottentot distinguishes the print of his neighbour's foot amongst the traces of countless steps; and follows the bee through the air with a sight so piercing, as to track the insect to its very nest, as easily as the sportsman marks his game. The sense of hearing is no less acute in many savage nations; as among the New Hollanders, and the ferocious people of New Zealand. The sense of smell, also, acquires among some tribes a singular perfection: it is by this sense that the Calmuck turns his steps towards the distant fires of an encampment, where booty may be obtained, or rest for the night. The Peruvians detect by the smell the country or race of several of the South American nations, perceiving a certain odour from the skin, which the European cannot



detect, but which the Peruvian discovers with as much readiness as the European perceives the obvious impression made on his sense of smell by the skin of a negro. In these instances we see modes of life which are in many things analogous to the modes of life of the beasts of the forest, assisted by acuteness of senses analogous to what the lower animals possess, and evidently arising from increased exercise and attention, in consequence of the wants and the dangers to which men are in such a state exposed. The varieties in the acuteness of the senses observed in civilized countries, are also in a great measure attributable to exercise and attention. Without a natural capacity for exercise, no exercise can be efficient; but with it, the difference between the exercised and the unexercised sense almost amounts to that which exists between a sense and the deprivation of that sense. A sportsman detects a hare, where a novice in the field sees nothing but clods and stones: a botanist espies the modest beauties of the smallest flower among "all the common weeds that grow." The experienced naturalist sees differences which the learner cannot see; and the physician detects the characters of disease amidst the vivacity and deceptive bloom of apparent health.

The sense of smell is that which is least employed in civilized nations: and there are many persons in whom it is so obtuse as hardly to have

any existence. Others are naturally possessed of great and even inconvenient acuteness of this sense, and almost "die of a rose in aromatic pain." This peculiar acuteness is in our country commonly seen in particular families, and is generally connected with a high degree of susceptibility in the whole of the nervous system. The modern Romans appear to be singularly affected in this way; so that even a perfumed pocket handkerchief is an affliction to them. We may see instances of the acuteness of smell arising from practice and attention in those who deal in drugs, spices, tea, and various articles of grocery, of which a certain perfume is indicative of certain qualities.

Another, and very common example of senses becoming more acute from greater attention being paid to them, may be observed in the accurate senses of touch and hearing of many blind persons; who, by this merciful compensation of nature, can detect places and persons with great facility, and pursue a great variety of useful occupations. In some instances, the blind have also possessed an increased acuteness of smell, and it has proved a ground of attachment or aversion to those with whom they mixed.

If the emotions may, as has already been said, be considered as modifications of sensation, it should in this place be observed that they are more forcible in some individuals than in others; some being



more susceptible of joy, sorrow, compassion, anger, love, hatred, than others are seen to be: and as the will springs from certain desires and affections originating in a sensibility to emotions and sensations, but regulated by the understanding, it is evident that the character of the individual must depend upon the degree in which the natural or acquired strength of his mental faculties is able to control his natural sensibility to emotions and to the impressions of sense. Those lowest in the human scale are wholly given up to the passions and appetites; many, far above these, are yet the sport of every emotion and affection; others more fortunately constructed, or who have been guided and disciplined to better ends, acquire various degrees of command over these impulses; and the least faulty of our species attain the highest degree of mental control over the suggestions of their physical and moral nature.

The instances which have been mentioned of varieties in the acuteness and power of the senses, and of the frequent dependence of these varieties on the employment of a more diligent attention to the objects of the particular sense, are sufficiently obvious; and are in themselves enough to show the important nature of that faculty of attention of which the degrees of perfection form the basis of memory, of comparison, of reflection, and, with the exception of imaginative power, of every intel-

lectual excellence. The power of exercising it, as of exercising the senses, admits of some natural varieties in different individuals ; or of a facility of applying it to different objects of external or internal sense, productive in different individuals of different kinds of attainment, and different kinds of mental production. The varieties of attainment which result from its exercise take, in many instances, their character from the accuracy or acuteness of some sense possessed by the same individual; and thus in various arts and sciences, each acquires some peculiar distinction. The painter attends to form and colour, the geometrician to figure and number, the chemist to the composition of bodies, the naturalist to the habits of animals or characters of plants, the astronomer to the arrangement and movements of the stars, the moralist to the still more intricate movements of human feelings, as indicated by human actions ; and each thus exercising attention on the objects of sense, institutes those comparisons between the several objects present, or present and past, seen at once, or seen alternately, or seen and remembered, or remembered only, and performs those abstractions and acts of reflection which lead to learning and to knowledge.

The power of attending to objects may be greatly increased by voluntary efforts. When we determine to study a subject, we determine to



attend to it, and we find that what we considered beyond our understanding becomes intelligible. One of the great objects of education should be to accustom the attention as well as the senses to exercise. The great difference between man and man, the superior acquirement, influence, and power of the most envied individuals, arises almost wholly from the superior degree in which they possess, as a gift of nature, or the result of effort, this single faculty. A man who cannot command his attention must always be inferior to him who can; and to whatever line of human pursuit the attention is steadily directed, in that line the person who makes the effort becomes, to a certain extent, and in proportion to the natural vigour of the faculty, eminent. Labour, which alone imparts value to all the productions of the earth, is no less essential to the value of any man's intellectual power; and no one knows of what he is capable until he resolutely tries. When accident compels particular attention to any subject, it is always experienced that more is seen in connection with it than had been previously supposed to be within its sphere: the subject acquires a new character; is seen in a new light. Original thoughts, previously unconceived, arise in the mind, and truths, not perceived before, now and then reward the laborious investigator with unexpected pleasures. The noblest works of antiquity were con-

structed without models; the brightest actions which have ever made man illustrious, were performed without pre-existing examples; the highest discoveries achieved by man were made without the learning of books. When Sir Isaac Newton was asked by what means he had arrived at his discoveries, he replied, "By always thinking unto them." On another occasion he said, "I keep the subject constantly before me, and wait till the first dawnings open slowly, by little and little, into a full light." And in a letter to Dr. Bentley, he says, "If I have done the public any service in this way, it is due to nothing but industry and patient thought." This extraordinary man was in many things an exception to the ordinary intelligences among whom he was thrown—one might almost say by mistake—if the Great Power which governs all things could mistake, and if we did not rather observe and admire, how, from time to time, such intellectual organizations are permitted to appear, for the advancement of the wisdom and the virtue of human beings. But many examples by which individuals would be shown to have raised themselves from obscurity to distinction, by original invention, might be quoted among less distinguished men, in whose habits of life are to be found the clearest traces of severe and uninterrupted and voluntary thought: and whoever will determine to employ the faculties of his mind dili-



gently, and especially his attention, will discover that he can understand more, and effect more than he at one time believed it possible to do. Whatever talents are possessed, it is a positive duty to exercise them; and above all it should be remembered, by those who are happy enough to possess talents superior to others, that "great parts are a great trust." \*

In endeavouring to speak of the separate faculties, their mutual dependence, or the mutual assistance afforded by them, meets us at every step. We have seen how necessary, even to the perfection of the best organized sense, is the faculty of attention. The faculty of attention itself, without the faculty of memory, would have a most limited range. We might be constantly observing, and constantly comparing things present with one another; but having no power of recalling things, when once past, we should not remember the result of the comparison; we should acquire no experience, and no wisdom. But attention is the parent of memory, and where the first is greatest, the last is most indelible. If, in the education of a child, we mix our encouragement of its natural desire to exercise its senses, with attempts to command that attention which it is so easy to excite, we shall find we have laid the foundations of memory far more securely, than by

\* Burke.

efforts to chain its attention on things which can with difficulty be made the object of sense. The memory is doubtless of various power in various individuals. Whilst there are some, in whom the characters engraven by a certain share of attention are effaced by succeeding impressions, like the figures drawn for amusement on the sands of the sea-shore, which the next tide destroys ; there are, on the other hand, individuals in whom the memory seems to retain every impression for ever. In examples of the latter kind, however, we may sometimes observe, that the memory, though retentive, is not capacious ; and that the attention, though acute, is not so comprehensive as to combine with unusual force, as regards one set of impressions, even the common degree of power as regards others. The man who counted the words which Garrick spoke in a tragedy, attended merely to the words. The sense, the expression, the power and genius of the actor, were not attended to by him, and he received and retained no impression of them. There are few so singularly gifted as Pascal is said to have been ; not only with the power of acquiring and excelling in any branch of knowledge, but with a memory so retentive, as that “he forgot nothing of what he had done, read, or thought, in any part of his rational age.” \*

Thus far we see that, notwithstanding the various

\* Locke.



power of the senses, of the attention, and the memory, in different persons, care and study alone may effect a great diversity ; and particularly that much attention may improve the senses and strengthen the memory. But there is something peculiar in the next faculty to be spoken of—that of Imagination ; a faculty all the varieties and all the influences of which the pathologist, but more especially the mental pathologist, ought to make his study.

The objects upon which the Imagination is exercised, may be increased in number by, as they are all originally derived from, the use of the senses ; and by a certain power of attention. The more materials there are stored in the memory, the more diversified will be the shapes and forms into which the imagination compels them. Still, there is a diversity in the power of imagination of different men, to which no care can add. It is perhaps invariably and necessarily connected with a great susceptibility to sensations and emotions ; and certainly the superiority which it confers, is that to which most intellects most agree to bow, as being as admirable in its effects, as in itself it is unattainable by study and by art.

A dull man may by a diligent use of his senses, and by plodding attention to their impressions, acquire an exact, although it be a limited knowledge ; he may store his memory, and acquire sufficient wisdom for all the purposes of life : but

to the limited powers of his imagination he can add nothing. If he is unfortunate enough to believe that this great gift is to be acquired by attention to rules, or to be accumulated by industry, he finds too late that he is wholly in the wrong, and exhibits himself in the ill-arranged finery of wealthier minds, without attracting the least degree of admiration. No less in vain is the attempt of the dull to depreciate that which they are totally unable to comprehend ; for the faculty of imagination, though often fatal by its excess, is never possessed in a remarkable degree by men in whom the other faculties are greatly limited ; and it is seldom absent in, though it may be cautiously restrained by, those whose sensations and emotions, and whose attention and memory, are powerful and comprehensive. It may have a little vagrant exercise in the weak and foolish, and its limited power may dominate over the general imbecility of the other faculties, but its higher aspirations are only accorded to those, who, in all the other faculties of mind, are equal to men of no common scale of intellect. If it exist in great strength, and the other faculties so balance it as to make it subservient to their purposes, the offices for which it was imparted to men, either exclusively, or at least as a distinction from the inferior animals, are then justly performed : it attracts the other faculties to more frequent exercise ; it proposes what could not possibly have been pre-



viously proved; it adds to the pleasure of thought in all who think, and it aids even the most deliberate operations of the philosopher, whom it prompts to various investigations, and lights on his way to great discoveries. Other men may learn what others know, but a man so gifted can learn that of which all other men are ignorant. The fleeting suggestions of this faculty may be made to many; but in him alone, by proposing some grand and attainable object, they lead to such an exercise of the senses, and to such attention and comparison, and abstraction, and reflection, as produce truths unknown before. Of these effects it is sufficient to recall to the reader the splendid illustration afforded by the works and biography of Bacon, of Newton, and of Davy.

Even in minds less happily balanced, but yet not deficient in the other faculties,—minds in which imagination gains the ascendancy, will not be commanded, but yet does not rule despotically,—it leads to combinations of thought, and to decorations of wisdom, which attract many to both; and throws a charm round all objects, even of mere human interest, which few do not feel and acknowledge. The government of the imagination is, doubtless, no less essential to happiness than to wisdom: like all other advantages of nature, it is the most to be valued when not in excess; and it is the most beneficial to the possessor, when accompanied and

balanced by a liberal proportion of the other gifts of mind, and by a disposition to attend to what is useful, rather than to what is merely pleasurable. But under proper regulation, it is to its possessor a gift of exceeding and incalculable value ; so augmenting every external sense as to be like the addition of one more than is possessed by his fellow-creatures ; and giving to his recollected sensations and feelings a vividness of which lower organizations are quite incapable. It imparts energy to every faculty, and, strictly guarded by their action, ministers to them even in all the business of life : it inspires the thoughts of the poet ; it dictates to the orator ; it breathes on the ear of the composer harmonies never heard on earth before ; it directs the sculptor to the beauty which lies buried in the shapeless block, unseen by any eye but his ; it cheers and supports through excitement, through anxiety, in watchings and labours impossible but for the help which flows from this eternal source ; and it leads each in his own language to the expression of that ideal beauty which fills his mind, and which none else can feel or represent. In the absence of all other revelations of the Creator's will, this faculty it is which leads man, in sage or simple or savage state, to some conception, some adumbration and foreknowledge, of a state beyond this life, where what can only be felt here, may be a blest reality. Whilst to the



man who possesses no imagination, a flower is a mere flower, and night and day are but a succession of light and darkness, and the landscape is but so many acres of various coloured earth; he knows only that the flowers appear because it is the season of spring, and the leaves fall because it is autumn, and the storm rages because it is winter. But the man of glowing imagination is penetrated with all the undefinable influences of external nature,—of the morning and evening, and the deep night, and of every changing season; and associates all these with those images of greatness and that unattainable moral beauty which, all inconsistent and wayward as he may be, for ever exist within his soul. He finds, in the simplest flower that blows, a volume of contemplation: the scattered leaves present him with lessons of mortality: he hears the voice of God in the wind. He penetrates to the mysterious meanings of all that meets the mortal sense, and has sympathies of thought which never yet were uttered in words. Without losing his consciousness, as men in sleep, he can exercise the boundless power of fancy in his study, or in his walks, or in the crowd; create imaginary characters, invest them with life, animate them with feelings, inform them with eloquence; or, exhausting all the materials of this world, he can wander into regions to all else forbidden: the portals of hell admit him to the dreadful

secrets within ; or he travels in the immeasurable spaces between the everlasting stars, and the gates of heaven turn on their “golden hinges” to receive him.

Those who have dwelt with delight on the productions of our own Shakspeare and our own Milton, will need no other illustrations of this character, nor any assurance that this account of it is not exaggerated. Of the personal history of Shakspeare we unfortunately know but little ; but what we do know leaves us in no doubt that he was formed in nature’s happiest mould ; that his feelings, temper, judgment, “all the elements” were so mixed in him, that, whilst the realities of the world could not chill his fancy, his mighty imagination never overmastered his understanding. Of that other glorious person we know, from his writings, from his immortal poems and his majestic prose, and from all the biographical details of his life, enough to convince us that he was all and more than all that has been described ; and therefore enabled at once to take a great share in the business of life in times of national calamity ; and, although exposed to the fretting influences of unhappy domestic arrangements, and, in his old age and blindness, to poverty and neglect, still to maintain thoughts and perform actions worthy of the heroic cast of his mind ;—and still, as has been



truly and beautifully observed by a living poet worthy to praise him, "his soul was like a star, and dwelt apart."\*

The lot of man would indeed be unequally cast, if the privileges of imagination were ever enjoyed without alloy. This wonderful faculty has the power of adding to the pains and griefs of life, no less than to its most exalted pleasures. The very susceptibility with which it is commonly conjoined, makes this inevitable. Both by its power of exaggerating hope and fear, and joy and sorrow, it hurries men towards errors from which nothing but the greatest vigilance of their attention and comparison can preserve them. If it can assist our senses, and make every impression more intense, it can also personate real objects and create delusive impressions: in doing this, it can array itself in the colours of confidence and hope, but it can also exchange them for the darker hues of suspicion and despair. Capable of every variety of garb and character, as it can hallow industry and thought, and lend dignity to common pursuits, so also can it lend illusion and charm to dissipation, and conceal the pernicious grossness of vice. If, in happily constructed minds, or in those whom accident has directed into paths not abounding with temptation, it elevates their aspirations and embellishes the

\* Wordsworth:—Sonnet on Milton.

character ; so, in less fortunate persons, its luxuries are associated with all that misleads and all that betrays ; and its false light plays around their sinking virtue like those vaporous churchyard gleams, which flicker over the graves of the dead when every other light has passed away.—When we come to examine departures from sound mind, it will be found that there is no inconsiderable catalogue of mental evils connected with the imagination, when, from some natural or acquired defect in those faculties which ought to restrain it, it is allowed an unbridled license.

What has been said of the value of the faculty of attention, renders it unnecessary for me to dwell on the exceeding importance of that alternate attention which is called Comparison. Yet some possess great power of attention with little readiness of that alternate attention which constitutes comparison ; and consequently acquire better than they judge. It is the exertion of comparison which leads to all exact knowledge, and it is certainly the most important of all the modes of mental action. Simple attention, without the power of alternate attention, would place man in the scale of the lower animals ; and the superior accuracy of the alternate attention exercised by him on things present, or on things absent, or on things present and absent, or on things real and imagined, gives him whatever rank he attains in



the opinion of his fellow-men. Without it, little could be acquired, and the judgment could have no exercise; the actions would generally be ill regulated, and, when the wisest, hardly more than instinctive. The loss or impairment of this faculty will be found, when we come to the consideration of lunatics, to merit particular regard. A powerful exercise of it may be also a limited exercise. The man of wit in conversation, the poet who is profuse in the employment of similes, the teacher who teaches every thing by examples, the orator whose figures are even wearisome, all possess this faculty in great power, but limited to the observation of resemblances. So does the sanguine man, who is always in the present enjoyment of some hypothesis of his own or of others. But that further comparison which detects differences distinguishes the more accurate reasoner, and gives a higher character to his thoughts, his words, and his writings. Those who possess it in the highest degree can seldom be imposed upon; and they exercise a correct and severe judgment upon every subject that comes before them.

Neither is it necessary to dwell on the diversity of different natures, with respect to the internal sensations or emotions which give origin to the affections and passions. It is evident that some are more susceptible than others of love, or fear, or shame, or anger: but the degree in which these

feelings have been checked by the exertion of the mental faculties has so much to do with their habitual indulgence, or with the habitual command of them, that any further consideration of them may be deferred until we speak of the terrible disorders of mind which they accompany, or to which they lead.

The strength of the emotions and passions, if originating in the primary strength of mere sensation, re-acts upon the senses and all the faculties of the mind ; suggests, or directs, or even creates, what we call Attention, and gives vivacity to the Memory and Imagination. Instigated by the desire of distinction, by indignation, or by mere animal passion, the intellect is put to unusual exertions, and can perform them. Invention, contrivance, and discovery, have commonly arisen from a desire for some convenience or luxury ; and the most poignant efforts of wit, though often produced under the influence of a love of praise, have not unfrequently sprung from the feeling of anger. The intensity with which every sensation or emotion is felt naturally becomes, therefore, in many cases, a kind of measure of the imaginative faculty.

Very little observation will convince any one who attends to the words, actions, expression, and general character of those whom he meets in his daily intercourse with the world, that the faculties



of mind, enumerated in the second chapter; are possessed in various degrees and combinations, by different individuals, without actual impairment of mind. Whatever may be the original situation of individuals, supposing each to have enjoyed some advantages of education, it will be found that men take their places in the scale of wisdom and virtue, and consequently, in the world, according to the degrees in which those mental faculties are possessed by them. Some are admired for the singular perfection of one or two; others elevated by the excellence of all; and a few lifted far above the rest by the combination of general strength of the mental faculties with transcendant power of one faculty in particular, a combination to which we give the distinctive name of Genius, concerning the nature of which there have been so many disputes; the very existence of which has sometimes been, doubtless by those who were very ignorant of its nature, wholly denied; and which, in its greatest perfection, is the conjunction of all that is admirable in mind, with all that is excellent and perfect in the objects of its exercise. This meaning of Genius must not be confounded with that in which it is often very erroneously used, with reference to men who acquire without difficulty a certain degree of proficiency in every thing they attempt, but who never apply to any one thing so entirely as to do any

good. In these men the continued application of the attention is difficult, and so far the faculty itself is imperfect: they appear very truly to be what a writer in the *Spectator* calls "so many unfinished pieces of nature wrought off in haste."\*

The definition which I have given of Genius, is borne out by the history of such individuals as the two who were mentioned a few pages back, and whose claims to the appellation of men of genius, will not, I imagine, be disputed. All contemporary accounts of Mr. Burke, whether proceeding from his friends or from his enemies, concur in representing him as a man of this description: as one who seemed to possess that power of universal acquirement which men who delight in mental exercises often desire, but for which human life is too short, and human talents, except in these rare instances, are too limited. His character as a profound politician, notwithstanding several errors into which he seems to have been driven by the impetuosity of his physical temperament, is sufficiently established by the frequent references which men of all parties make to his authority: but we are told that he had also so wonderful a capacity for making himself acquainted with all branches of knowledge, that on whatever subject he spoke, the hearer was led to suppose that subject had been

\* No. 307.



the study of his whole life. This was repeatedly observed as being the character of his public orations, which necessarily comprehended at different times subjects widely various, and, to common apprehensions, incompatible. In private conversation also, which, though demanding less mental power, yet, as it descends more into particulars, is perhaps a more severe trial of the exact depth of a man's information, the effect he produced was even greater. Dr. Johnson said of him, "if a man were to go by chance, at the same time with Burke, under a shed, to shun a shower, he would say,—‘this is an extraordinary man.’ If Burke should go into a stable to see his horse drest, the ostler would say, ‘we have had an extraordinary man here.’” And on another occasion, he remarked, “Burke is the only man whose common conversation corresponds with the general fame which he has in the world. Take up whatever topic you please, he is ready to meet you.” It is curious also, that Burke had his great admirers in the only particular concerning which Johnson was unwilling to acknowledge he had any merit, that is, with respect to his *wit*.\* Such was his knowledge of circumstances and places connected with America and American history, that Benjamin West, himself an American, seems

\* Boswell's Life of Johnson, Vol. III. p. 396; and the Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides, 3d edition, p. 20.

to have half suspected him of being his countryman, and firmly to have believed that he must have visited America. Knowledge so extensive, so various, and so accurate, could not have been acquired without every faculty of the mind being possessed in the highest degree of perfection. The attention must, in the first place, have been precise and powerful; memory highly faithful and retentive; imagination vivid; the power of comparing vigorous; the great result, when the mental exercise was not obstructed by passion, was a judgment in the utmost degree correct. Whatever he had attempted he would probably have mastered, and in different circumstances would have excited no less admiration as a poet, a painter, or a lawyer, than he did as an orator, an author, and a statesman. Viewing his character altogether, I should say, that possessing every faculty in perfection, his superiority arose from the surpassing comprehensiveness and power of his attention.

The ordinary circumstances of life do not, however, require the possession of genius; nor is it at all essential to wisdom or to virtue. The most enviable condition of mind is that by which an individual is enabled to judge well and to act well in all ordinary emergencies. This is health and soundness of mind; the result of the harmonious action of all the mental faculties. It is compatible with great and useful acquisitions; but it does not invent or



add. It constitutes a man of talent, not a man of genius. It does not prompt its possessor to challenge the attention and admiration of the world; but its utility is constant, its operations are seldom disturbed, and the happiness it produces is commonly even and uninterrupted. This is the character of mind of those whom we meet with in common life, who are not remarkable for any formal or any brilliant indications or proofs of intellect, but whose opinion on any given subject is commonly so correct, that by the consent of all their neighbours they are the constituted advisers in all matters of individual importance. It may be said of such useful persons, that although they cast no broad intellectual light over human affairs, the serene rays of their understanding cheer and illumine the humble valleys of life; each shedding around a little circle of human society consolation and direction in the unavoidable trials of all who compose it. Men's opinion of them is ordinarily expressed by saying that they possess "a sound judgment;"—but judgment is the result of accurate comparison, and this again is alternate attention to objects of sense or memory, aided by a docile imagination: they therefore possess all the mental faculties in a certain degree of perfection, and in just proportion to each other.

I am anxious to impress, on such of my readers as may be called upon by their professional duties

to give an opinion in cases of impairment of mind and of insanity, the importance of attending to these characters of the mind in health. I would beg them to exercise a continual observation on the examples, which every day will present to them, of the variety which these characters may assume, without the mental health being either impaired or suspected of impairment. They will not find it useless to acquaint themselves even with the indications afforded, by external expression and by language, of all the peculiarities of mental influences in different circumstances. The subject is full of interest and of instruction.

In the next place, I would beg their most serious consideration of the instances of inequality, weakness, or other peculiarity of mind ; and of all those cases in which the mind suffers actual impairment, without wholly excluding the individual from all approach to that happy state of wisdom and virtue which is the result of perfect mental health, and without insanity. It is a study which no one, who values the possession of mind, can feel indifferent to ; but one which the medical practitioner cannot neglect without neglecting his duty. The greater the number of examples of this kind which he has contemplated and reflected upon, the better will he understand all that relates to disorder of the mind, and the less will be his difficulty in any case in which his opinion or his advice may be required.



## CHAPTER V.

INEQUALITIES, WEAKNESSES, AND PECULIARITIES OF THE  
HUMAN UNDERSTANDING, WHICH DO NOT AMOUNT TO  
INSANITY.

IN a preceding chapter I have briefly considered the faculties of a healthy mind, and the order of their development: in the last chapter certain varieties observable without any impairment were spoken of and illustrated. I now proceed to notice some of those inequalities, weaknesses, and peculiarities, the consideration of which I have asserted to be essential to the present inquiry; inequalities, weaknesses, and peculiarities affecting the power or the activity of some or of all the mental faculties, and yet not producing insanity. I design, by this kind of survey, to prepare the reader for distinguishing all these varieties from true insanity, and also for appreciating the difference between one degree and form of insanity and another. Without asserting that these distinctions have been wholly overlooked, it may assuredly be said, that they have been greatly disregarded; and, perhaps, that all the erroneous views of the nature of insanity, and all the most serious of the errors which have been committed in the management of the insane, have had inattention to these distinctions, or

ignorance of them, for their source. I shall pursue my inquiry according to the order in which the mental faculties have already been noticed; and I am now and then tempted into some minuteness of detail, I beg the reader to consider that many of the cases comprehended in this chapter are the cases which give rise to doubt, uncertainty, and, as I apprehend, to frequent practical mistakes.

It is by the senses alone that we hold any communication with external nature; or with living objects. It is by the senses of others and by our own that we communicate our thoughts and feelings to others. Without the senses we could have no consciousness of existence. Their loss breaks our connexion with our fellow-creatures; is the loss of a portion of our life. If we are with a deaf person we seem separated from him by an almost impassable partition; if with one who is blind, an impervious curtain seems interposed between us; with those whose exclusion from sense is greater, as with those both blind and deaf, we can but faintly discern the mind which is so helpless and unprovided: its identity with our own is obscured, so different are its thoughts and feelings from our thoughts and feelings, or so difficult is the mutual communication of them. The loss of a single sense,—a common calamity, and one which men commonly bear with patience,—alters our mode



existence, and greatly excludes a man from the society of his fellow creatures. Deprived of sight, the world of touch to which he becomes so much confined is found to differ wholly from the world of colour in which the use of the eyes had placed him, and in which he lived before. The loss of two senses which have formerly been enjoyed yet further limits our consciousness of what is around us in the world, and is a large approach to the insensibility of death. If we were to be deprived of one more, our state would be no longer a state of feeling and enjoyment, but a mode of existence so limited as hardly to admit of any voluntary exertion or any happiness.

But in the event of the loss of one sense, the impressions formerly received by that sense, the emotions which arose from it, the ideas which sprung from it, may remain, and the mind be no further impaired than simply by the loss of the sense for immediate or future purposes. For these purposes it *is* impaired; it cannot institute a comparison between any present objects on which that particular sense should be exerted, or between them and the recollections of the former impressions of the sense now lost. If, therefore, the sense has never been possessed, the individual is a defective man to that extent, and is incapacitated to such an extent from the formation of comparison

and a correct judgment. And that his mind is not further impaired by the privation of such sense or senses, arises only from his not endeavouring to reason about things concerning which that sense or those senses could alone give him information. He compares only what he perceives, and he therefore continues to make comparisons which, however limited, are still correct.

There are individuals whose sensations of colour do not accord with those of the generality of mankind ; who do not know blue from green : others who cannot distinctly see near or distant objects ; or distinguish different tastes ; or hear minute sounds perceptible to the ears of others, or derive any greater pleasure from a musical composition of the first merit, than from the strains of a street fiddle, or the scream of a peacock. In these persons there is an impairment or defect in the nerves which communicate sensation ; commonly a natural defect ; sometimes an accidental impairment, as in a man whom I knew, who lost the sense of smell after a severe fall from his horse, by which his head, behind one ear, was severely injured. Such impairments or defects are commonly discovered and avowed by the persons affected ; and they rely on the judgment of others, concerning those things of which they have themselves no accurate sense. A man does not assert that blue is green, or green is blue ; or that there are no such



things as harmony or odour. If he did assert such things, and from a fixed belief, his mind would on that point be diseased, and his judgment incorrect.

A constitutional peculiarity is observed in certain individuals, sometimes referrible to depravement of an external sense, the sense of smell, and sometimes not very explicable; as in the instances of antipathies excited by particular objects. The most common case is that of an aversion to cats; by which, among others, Henry III. of France and the Duke of Schomberg were afflicted: persons cherishing this aversion are, it would seem, actually affected, in some unexplained way, by the presence of a cat in the same room with them, even when not aware that the animal is really there. The fact may depend on high susceptibility of the nerves of smell; or it may be connected with some uneasy condition of the nervous system, or some electric agency, about which it would not be very profitable here to dispute. In some instances, the sense of touch is disagreeably affected by such impressions as are either indifferent or agreeable to others, as the touch of velvet, or silk, or of the skin of a hare or rabbit. An aversion to particular sounds, and a peculiar affection for others, is very common, even when no circumstance of association accounts for the peculiarity. Dr. Reid had a patient, who had a great dislike to light colours, and used to beg him,

before he paid his visit, to cover his white stockings with a black apron. A famous Russian general entertained a singular antipathy to mirrors, and the Empress Catherine always took care to give him audience in a room without any. I have known patients, in whom there was a tendency to mania, complain of the difficulty they found in guarding against dislike, not only of particular individuals, but of particular parts of a room, or of the house, or of particular articles of furniture or dress ; those momentary feelings of uneasiness or antipathy to which all are subject, becoming in them aggravated and prolonged. It is recorded of one of our English poets, that his chief delight was to sit still all day and have his hair combed by an attendant. *Sunt qui nullam voluptatem in mulieribus capiant, nisi ex basiis, vel ex formam pedum contemplando. Cuidam nihil gratius fuit quam ut mulier ei cutem abdominis scalpello leviter titillaret.* Other illustrations will probably occur to the reader which it is unnecessary to specify. In any general excitement of the nervous system, it is not uncommon to find irritation referred to the extremities of nervous ramifications. The susceptible child when interested with its books, bites the ends of its fingers ; the nervous man in a state of anxiety or emotion does the same. Lord Byron describes the “silent rage” of passionate boyhood, seeking relief by biting a piece out of a cup. The



approach of maniacal disorder is sometimes indicated by a disposition to bite, cut, and tear the fingers. Strong tea or spirits will produce a temporary effect of this kind. In all these cases there is some irritation of the sentient nerves productive of uneasy or unusual sensations. The injuries and wounds inflicted on themselves by lunatics, are often to be similarly accounted for. These peculiarities are sometimes the effect, but never alone the causes of impaired mind.

The faculties of uneducated people, and particularly of the lower order, who are neither instructed by precept nor observation, are so little used, as to be incapable of many kinds of mental exercise. They suffer daily the same inconveniences, for want of power to connect causes and effects. Even their senses are so unskilfully employed and unimproved, that we cannot always depend on what they believe they have seen with their eyes, or heard with their ears. It was erroneously said by the advocates of the belief in witchcraft, that in matters of *fact* or of *sense*, the vulgar were equal to the wise, though inferior in matters of *theory* or reason. The truth is, that they are inferior in both, and the inferiority arises in both cases from the same cause :—

“ Our very eyes  
Are sometimes, like our judgments, blind.”

False opinions in all matters retreat, as to their

last hold, to the common people, who are of course peculiarly obstinate in their adherence to those of which they imagine they have sometime or other had the evidence of their senses. But we *learn* to use our senses, no less than we learn to compare and to reason on what they present to us; and it will be found that the first kind of learning, simple and easy as it may seem, is never perfectly acquired by those who are utterly unacquainted with the second, so that the senses are really, in such persons, as fallacious as the judgment itself. Those who have not had the advantages of instruction generally defer, in matters requiring judgment, to those better able to judge, and the deficiency produces no remarkable disorder of conduct; but when, supported by some supposed evidence of their senses, quite as much as when from an obstinate opinion of their own judgment, they disregard their usual guides, and act for themselves, they act with all the indiscretion, and often with all the violence of madmen. The erroneous comparisons and judgment lead to irrational actions, and the madness of the people, arising from superstitious fears or popular prejudice, has been as real as any other kind of madness.

There are certain states of the nerves of sensation, or of the mind, in which the impression of objects is made upon or suggested to the senses, without the objects themselves being present; and these



states, though generally accompanied with evident symptoms of corporeal disease, are sometimes themselves the only departures from a perfect state of bodily as well as of mental health. Many extraordinary appearances, related by persons of credit, are probably thus to be explained. An instance in which the eyes were the subject of the delusion, and the effect apparently induced by a long continuance of a posture favouring an accumulation of blood in the head, occurred in a family of my own acquaintance: a woman was engaged to clean a house which had for some time been uninhabited; and when she was employed in washing the stairs she saw, on accidentally lifting up her head, the feet and legs of a gigantic woman; and, greatly alarmed at such an apparition, fled from the house without waiting for the further development of the figure. In another instance, a young lady was accustomed to sit up at night long after the rest of the family had retired to rest, and to devote the silent hours to the perusal of works addressed chiefly to the imagination; often leaning her head upon her hands for some time, in the natural attitude of one absorbed in the perusal of what is highly interesting: but on closing the volume, and raising her head, it would sometimes happen that she saw the figure of a deceased relative standing on the other side of the table, and looking intently upon her: the very natural suggestion on these

occasions was to snatch up her candle and endeavour to make the best of her way out of the room; but the figure still interposed itself, and, overcome with fear, the young lady commonly fainted. The circumstances of this case, it will presently be seen, connect it closely with others in which such appearances precede violent convulsive paroxysms, and are a part of the disease.

A slight degree of fever is sufficient to induce annoyances of this nature. They sometimes accompany a severe cold; and in the month in which I am writing (December, 1829,) several instances have been presented to my notice, during a very moist and foggy state of the atmosphere, with cold winds, of febrile attacks lasting only a few days, coming on with shivering, and attended with severe pains in the limbs, and the particular form of cerebral disturbance which has just been mentioned. The progress of my work naturally increased the interest with which I listened to the details of the succession of objects by which the patients were distressed, and endeavoured to account for them. —By an effort of the attention, any one may perceive in himself, that whenever he is not wholly engrossed by any subject,—not only when he is walking or sitting alone, but when he is conversing with others,—there is a wonderful variety of imagery passing through his mind; that instantaneous transitions are making of thoughts apparently the



most distant ; that whilst the general tenor of the conversation in which he may be engaged directs him chiefly to one subject, every sentence uttered by others may raise up a train of collateral thoughts and images, which do not divert him from the subject of conversation, but could not be mingled with it without unfolding a variety and wildness of thought that would but ill consort with the habitual order in which thoughts are expressed. To him whose affections are fixed on some distant scene or object, the image of such scene or object is still before him, however he may be engaged. The poet has a vivid sense of things not present : and every one has his own train of thoughts arising out of the associations which have at previous times been accidentally formed. In the febrile attacks which have been spoken of, the character and the succession of images, presented to the closed eye, seem to me to be very much like the ordinary succession, only in a greater degree of intensity and distinctness. The brain is irritated ; this part of its functions is morbidly performed ; and, the attention being withdrawn from those external impressions which commonly lead us on in one train of thought, whilst other trains do but hover round us like the unheeded insects of a summer evening, these minor or collateral trains assume an undue distinctness. As soon, therefore, as the eyes are closed, the world of thoughts, at other times but

dimly seen, becomes distinctly visible, and its images have all the variety of a dream, but a dream in which objects succeed each other in quicker and more fatiguing variety than the state of sleep generally permits. Landscapes, seas, rivers, the scenery of every region, pass before the excited organ of sight :—vast cities ; endless foliage ; patterns infinitely varied ; costumes the most fanciful ; incongruous architectural designs ; people of various classes, variously occupied ; faces or figures grotesque, deformed, threatening, grimacing : or music comes upon the ear in singular combinations of harmony ; not unknown or unperceived on some occasions, as mere matters of thought or imagination, in the midst of the occupations of the day ; but now seeming more distinct, as if the bed-room contained an orchestra. Or voices are heard, whispering, shouting, hurrying, repeating the thoughts, and producing great distress to the feverish and watchful invalid.

This kind of disorder commonly lasts but a few hours, or a few days. If it becomes increased, the same objects are apparently presented to the eyes or ears when wide open ; and some delirium may ensue. A poor woman whose health was much disturbed used to complain at the Dispensary at Stratford that she was continually seeing faces and half figures. Sometimes the faces were presented in great numbers together, resembling so many



eager heads, all striving to look in at the door or windows. The common complaint of nervous persons, that they hear "noises in the head," the ringing of bells, or the firing of guns, or the noise of a water-mill or a spinning-wheel, or a sudden and loud shout, need not be dwelt upon: but, slight and common as they are, they are not always obviously explained, like the images just ascribed to an intense perception of mere thoughts; and they belong rather to a class containing some curious varieties which deserve more particular attention.

A striking instance is on record, which does not at first sight seem to admit of explanation; and which, as it is authentic, may here be mentioned. It is that of Nicolai, of Berlin, related by himself to the Royal Society of that city, in 1799. He was a man of much imagination and great industry: during the year 1790, he had been subjected to causes of great anxiety and sorrow; and it would seem that he had that year also neglected to lose blood by venesection or leeches so frequently as for some years, in consequence of vertigo and other complaints, resulting from studious and sedentary habits of life, he had been accustomed to do. Early in February, several incidents of a disagreeable nature occurred to him; and on the 24th of that month he relates:—"At ten o'clock in the forenoon my wife and another

person came to console me; I was in a violent perturbation of mind, owing to a series of incidents which had altogether wounded my moral feelings, and from which I saw no possibility of relief; when suddenly I observed at the distance of ten paces from me a figure, the figure of a deceased person. I pointed at it, and asked my wife whether she did not see it. She saw nothing, but being much alarmed, endeavoured to compose me, and sent for the physician. The figure remained some seven or eight minutes, and at length I became a little more calm :”—“ In the afternoon, a little after four o’clock, the figure which I had seen in the morning again appeared. I was alone when this happened; a circumstance, which, as may be easily conceived, could not be very agreeable. I went, therefore, to the apartment of my wife, to whom I related it. But thither also the figure pursued me. Sometimes it was present, sometimes it was absent, but it was always the same standing figure. A little after six o’clock several stalking figures also appeared; but they had no connexion with the standing figure.”—“ After I had recovered from my first impression of terror, I never felt myself particularly agitated by these apparitions, as I considered them to be what they really were, the extraordinary consequences of indisposition; on the contrary, I endeavoured as much as possible to preserve my



composure of mind, that I might remain distinctly conscious of what passed within me. I observed these phantoms with great accuracy, and very often reflected on my previous thoughts, with a view to discover some law in the association of ideas, by which exactly these or other figures might present themselves to the imagination. Sometimes I thought I had made a discovery, especially in the latter period of my visions ; but on the whole, I could trace no connexion which the various figures, that thus appeared and disappeared to my sight, had, either with my state of mind, or with my employment, and the other thoughts which engaged my attention."—"The figure of the deceased person never appeared to me after the first dreadful day, but several other figures showed themselves afterwards, very distinctly ; sometimes such as I knew, mostly, however, of persons I did not know ; and amongst those known to me, were the semblances of both living and deceased persons, but mostly the former : and I made the observation, that acquaintance with whom I daily conversed never appeared to me as phantasms ; it was always such as were at a distance. When these apparitions had continued for some weeks, and I could regard them with the greatest composure, I afterwards endeavoured at my own pleasure to call forth phantoms of several acquaintance, whom I for that reason represented

to my imagination in the most lively manner, but in vain. For however accurately I pictured to my mind the figures of such persons, I never once could succeed in my desire of seeing them *externally*; though I had some short time before seen them as phantoms, and they had perhaps afterwards unexpectedly presented themselves to me in the same manner. The phantasms appeared to me in every case involuntarily, as if they had been presented externally, like the phenomena in nature, though they certainly had their origin internally; and at the same time I was always able to distinguish, with the greatest precision, phantasms from phenomena. Indeed I never once erred in this, as I was in generally perfectly calm and self-collected on the occasion. I knew extremely well, when it only appeared to me that the door was opened, and a phantom entered, and when the door really was opened, and any person came in." These figures appeared to Nicolai when alone, or when in company, or even in the street, and continued to haunt him for about two months. They were most common when he was at home; and were seen whether his eyes were open or shut, though sometimes disappearing when he shut them. They were occasionally numerous, like people in a fair; and all were coloured, though a little more faintly than nature. At length they began to speak, either to one another or to him: their speeches



were short, and never disagreeable. His friends would seem to appear, and address consoling discourse to him. At last they disappeared; sometimes returning for a time, and lastly, during the time in which he was writing the account of them.\*

Many other instances might be recorded, in which the objects which have appeared have not been such as had been before seen; and in which the objects that were recalled to the memory, did not assume the same kind of distinctness, or semblance of reality, but were merely recalled in the ordinary manner. But it would yet seem, that the spectra *are*, in reality, associated, though often slightly and remotely, with some of the innumerable ideas which, at all times passing rapidly through the mind, pass more rapidly through it in certain morbid states of the body. Many parts of Nicolai's relation go to prove this. A correspondent in the Journal from which I have quoted the case of Nicolai, describes himself as having been the subject of such hallucinations during an attack of fever: he saw innumerable faces, all very agreeable, and expressing "great and amiable emotions of the human mind;" but, fancying that these appearances indicated a breaking up of the system, and that

\* Nicholson's Journal of Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, and the Arts; Vol. VI., p. 161. The whole narrative is full of interest.

the confusion of his senses was but the precursor of his speedy destruction, the spectra assumed a character associated with this uncheering belief: and instead of the very prepossessing faces which had before visited him, he beheld a visage of an enraged expression, which seemed to belong to a figure which presented a gun at him. The patient began to perceive the influence which his thoughts had upon his waking visions; and voluntarily directed them towards architectural recollections, and natural scenery; and, after some time, a corresponding change came over the appearances which were presented to him: he then thought of books and manuscripts, and presently he seemed to be in a library, where all the books and manuscripts were inverted. He then turned his thoughts towards music, and dreamt, during a short sleep, that a cat leaped upon his back, and awoke him with shrill and piercing screams. The sleeping and the waking dreams were thus plainly enough proved to be formed very much in the same manner.

A distinguished physiological writer of our own country has related something similar, although the accompaniment of a febrile state, which occurred in his own person. "I was labouring," he says, "under a fever, attended with symptoms of general debility, especially of the nervous system, and with a severe pain of the head, which was confined to a small spot situated above the right temple. After



having passed a sleepless night, and being reduced to a state of considerable exhaustion, I first perceived figures presenting themselves before me, which I immediately recognised as similar to those described by Nicolai, and upon which, as I was free from delirium, and as they were visible for about three days and nights with little intermission, I was able to make my observations. There were two circumstances which appeared to me very remarkable; first, that the spectral appearances always followed the motion of the eyes; and secondly, that the objects which were the best defined, and remained the longest visible, were such as I had no recollection of ever having previously seen. For about twenty-four hours, I had constantly before me a human figure, the features and dress of which were as distinctly visible as that of any real existence, and of which after an interval of many years, I still retain the most lively impression; yet neither at the time, nor since, have I been able to discover any person whom I had previously seen who resembled it.

“During one part of this disease, after the disappearance of this stationary phantom, I had a very singular and amusing imagery presented to me. It appeared as if a number of objects, principally human faces or figures, on a small scale, were placed before me, and gradually removed, like a succession of medallions. They were all of the same size,

and appeared to be all situated at the same distance from the face. After one had been seen for a few minutes, it became fainter, and then another, which was more vivid, seemed to be laid upon it, or substituted in its place, which in its turn, was superseded by a new appearance. During all this succession of scenery, I do not recollect that, in a single instance, I saw any object with which I had been previously acquainted, nor, as far as I am aware, were the representations of any of those objects, with which my mind was the most occupied at other times, presented to me; they appeared to be invariably new creations, or at least new combinations, of which I could not trace the original materials.”\*

I take these authentic recitals, disregarding the accumulation that might be made of like examples, for the elucidation of the subject before us, for which they are admirably fitted.

Let any one reflect within himself how Nicolai preserved his reason under such visionary and auditory delusions, for so many months: and why the English physiologist, though visited with the images which are so well known to be familiar with mad people, never lost the use of his excellent understanding. The ready answer will be, “they never believed in their real existence.” But why

\* Dr. Bostock’s System of Physiology, Vol. III., p. 204.



did they not? And why does the madman believe in their real existence? The evidence to both is the same;—the plain evidence of sense. No evidence, one would think, could be better. Were not Nicolai and Dr. Bostock rather to be called mad for not believing their senses, than others who do? The explanation must be this. The printer of Berlin, and the physician in London, retained the power of comparison: they compared certain objects represented to their sight with other objects represented to the same sense, and concluded that so many persons as were represented to them, could not pass through their chamber: they compared them with those actually present, and whose inattention to the spectres, they concluded to be a proof of their non-existence to their eyes: they compared the visual objects of delusion with the impressions of other senses, of hearing, and of touch, and acquired further evidence, that the whole was deception. This is exactly what madmen cannot do. One form of madness consists of this very illusion of sense: but it is *conjoined* with the loss or defect of the comparing power: and the madman concludes that what is only an illusion is a reality. But the illusion is not the madness. I used frequently to see a poor maniacal creature, in whose malady there were many intervals of sanity; and during these intervals she would grievously complain of

the annoyance she experienced from simultaneous illusions of sight, smell, hearing, and general sensation: all kinds of animals seemed to be scampering before her; the smell of brimstone and the continual sound of singing voices conspired to trouble her: and with all this, her expression used to be, that she felt "*still*, and as if she could die at any moment;" yet she was at such times quite conscious that her sensations were diseased; and was of sane mind: she could exercise her observation on others, and by comparison of their unconcern with the false images which her senses figured to be around them, remain convinced that the images were unreal. If Nicolai, or if Dr. Bostock, had for one moment lost the power of comparing, they must have believed the illusions to be real; and from the moment of such belief they must have been mad, and the same so long as the belief remained.

These examples, therefore, lead us to suspect, what many other examples will be brought to show, that madness consists of a loss or impairment of one or more of the mental faculties, accompanied by the loss of comparison.

Ben Jonson, whose memory was remarkably tenacious, and whose imagination was sufficiently lively, appears now and then to have experienced these morbid or false sensations. He told Drummond, that he had spent a whole night in lying



looking at his great toe, about which he had seen Tartars and Turks, Romans and Carthaginians, riding and fighting: but he knew that these were the effect of his heated fancy. The vision which he had whilst at Sir Robert Cotton's house in the country, of his son who was dying of the plague in London, had probably a similar origin.

Numerous impairments of sensation accompany several diseases, some of which will be noticed in the proper place. But it may be here remarked, by way of example, that in a fever, the patient's bed will seem in flames; or voices will whisper in his ear; or the smell of a banquet assail him; or his sense of touch seem opposed by moving and bulky bodies; or the sense of sight will be harassed by the rapid succession of imaginary faces, already spoken of, appearing and disappearing in endless trains and variety. Here, also, we may see a clear illustration of our subject. If we talk with patients thus affected, some will tell us, in a very quiet way, that they are thus tormented. Others will seem confused, and make a visible effort of sight and hearing before they tell us how they are troubled: and others will tell us what they see and what they hear, with an expressed belief, on their part, of the reality of what we know to be delusions. Of these three classes of patients, the last are in a state of delirium, the second are approaching to it, the first are in a state of sound mind.

What constitutes these shades of difference? The first patient attends to the sensations received from surrounding objects by senses not partaking of the morbid state. He recognises his own chamber, his own family, his medical attendant, his nurse: the other faces that flit before him he knows could not be in that chamber, and are not presented with the reality of those of the persons who are actually about him. He remembers that he became ill some days before, that he is feverish, that he took to his bed. Comparing the objects before him, and the things remembered, with the succession of features which have been displayed to him, or with the sounds he has seemed to hear, he is convinced that the latter are inconsistent with the former, and are the mere creations of his malady. The next patient is nearer to delirium: on awaking, for a few moments, the sight of his bed-curtains apparently on fire alarms him; he seizes the curtains, he looks anxiously about him; but his sense of touch, his observation of the tranquillity of those near him, being soon compared with the delusion of his vision, leads him to determine that his bed is not on fire, and that the appearance of flames is a part of his disease. When you speak to such a patient as he is awaking from his troubled sleep, your voice is at first associated with the images of his dream; but he opens his eyes, gazes upon you, takes hold of your hand, and by comparing sensa-



tions derived from things present, with what has appeared to him in his reverie, becomes in a short time quite collected. The third patient is mastered by the false sensations: he cannot command his attention to sensations actually arising from things present, or the sensations he has of things present are not accurate; he continues to talk to persons supposed to be present, and does not recognise the voices of his friends: his eyes are directed to them, but the impression he receives is of other figures and faces; he looks about his chamber, and yet thinks himself in a strange apartment. This man cannot, then, compare true sensations, which he does not receive, with the false sensations which he does receive; he cannot compare what he sees with what, in his febrile state, he cannot remember, and the immediate consequence is delirium, or an active madness. He is delirious, he is mad, because one or more of his mental faculties are impaired, and he is *at the same time* unable to exercise his comparing powers. In cases of fever I have many times watched these three states sliding into one another, as the patient, in the increase of his malady, lost the power of receiving correct sensation; and again, as the malady receded, regained it: and in the retardation of the progress towards delirium, or the promotion of recovery from it, by little efforts to engage the attention to true sensations, and to excite comparisons which would dispel

the belief in the illusions, I have certainly derived additional hope of the possible success of efforts, as well timed and assiduous, in cases often considered more hopeless. That interesting part of my subject must, however, be spoken of hereafter.

My object is not to record innumerable examples illustrative of each impaired faculty, but to produce conviction by selecting a few : and I proceed therefore to consider the modes in which the faculty of attention is occasionally impaired, without producing insanity.

The remarks which have already been made concerning the faculty of attention, prepare us to find that there can never be any remarkable impairment of this faculty with a perfect state of the rest. Being the foundation of memory, and of comparison, which is but its alternate exercise, whenever the attention is defective, comparison and memory must become very limited, and the judgment weakened or confined. But the exercise of the faculty is capable of some varieties which do not produce those effects in such a degree as to constitute insanity. Its activity differs in different individuals ; and its sphere or range of exercise varies very greatly. If much engrossed by one object, it is necessarily withdrawn from others ; and although readily transferred, in general, from one set of objects and ideas to another set of objects and



ideas, it is sometimes so tenacious of one set as to refuse, as it were, to turn to a succession. We read that when Sir Joshua Reynolds, after being many hours occupied in painting, walked out into the street, the lamp-posts seemed to him to be trees, and the men and women moving shrubs. His attention had been so long fixed and enchained to the picture before him, that he could not direct it to other objects of sensation. The attention is roused by whatever is new, and strange, and surprising, and commonly by what is pleasing and agreeable; and it is weakened by every cause of fatigue and exhaustion: a long journey impairs it; a monotonous story wears it out, and the hearer ceases to hear, and falls asleep: but in the state of heaviness and inattention produced by an endless talker, the cry of fire, or the alarm of an approaching enemy, would instantly awaken the faculty into the utmost activity. In all these cases the attention is inactive, torpid, or exhausted, but not lost; it is capable of being roused, and therefore its inactivity produces no further mental consequence. A medical gentleman, for whom I have much respect, used often, when a student, to exercise his mental faculties to extreme fatigue; and in such states of exhaustion lost the power of perfectly commanding his attention, which was not only perceived by himself in the want of power to continue his studies, but sometimes amusingly exhibited to his

companions. On one occasion, when about to describe the situation of some town which he had visited, he spoke of it as being situated in the Deltoid muscle ; immediately, however, perceiving his absurd mistake. His attention was sluggishly exerted on the words he wished to employ, but not so far impaired as to induce a loss of the power of comparison, consequently he was not irrational, not insane.

The indications of mental constitution afforded by our daily intercourse with society are very various, and very well worth attending to. There are persons of great learning and great observation whose discourse is but an expression of a long train of thought, which the common ceremonies of a visit cannot cut short. They pursue a subject in a crowded company with as much determination as if they were in their own study, and when it is broken in upon by the numerous interruptions incidental to the occasion, return to it again and again. In persons of this habit, there is no want of power in the faculty of attention ; there is, rather, great strength ; but they cannot readily transfer it from one subject to another. It is strong, but not active. They cannot exercise those continual acts of comparison and judgment which are required even at a dinner table or a ball, and their conversation and conduct are consequently inconsistent with the scene in which they are engaged. They



require, for the exercise of comparison, more time and leisure; and the comparisons made in their own study are commonly distinguished by correctness, insomuch that their conversation, incongruous as it may be with lights, and music, and dancing, or any social festivities, is generally very instructive; abounding with all information except common information.

These persons approach nearly to that amusing form of impairment in the faculty of attention, which is exhibited in *the absent man*. The faculty is capable of such diversified and simultaneous employment that, in general, men can pursue a train of thought as they walk or ride, and yet direct their steps or direct their horses with safety to themselves and others. The absent man cannot thus spread his attention over many things at once: it is concentrated on one subject, or one train of thought; and the most trivial thoughts are sufficient for its exclusive occupation: he therefore commits a thousand extravagances,—puts on his friend's hat, loses his way in his native town, goes to bed in the middle of the day because he finds himself in his bed-room, or forgets his own name when he knocks at a neighbour's door. From what has been already said of the connexion between Attention and Memory, it may be supposed that when the former faculty is much limited, or long impaired, the latter suffers injury: and many cases of

absence of mind present strong examples of it. Yet, the absent man is not mad. His attention is not lost, but only sluggish and inert. It is capable of being roused, and then he can compare, and judge, and act judiciously, which the madman cannot do.

The state of lethargy is but an excess of this disorder: a state in which the nervous system is so insensible to ordinary stimuli that none of the common circumstances of existence can act upon it: neither conversation, nor the pleasures of society, nor riding, nor driving, can keep the lethargic man thoroughly awake; and he sinks into a kind of mental paralysis, incapacitating him from every thing requiring thought. He has no wishes or desires, but for repose, and nothing excites his attention but what interrupts repose. He is as if every sense was lost, and every natural feeling, including the natural pleasure derived from the increase of knowledge and from doing good.

Want of attention may produce the results which could only be expected from want of sensation. When a man goes alone into a room in which there is a clock, he cannot at first avoid listening to *the ticking* of the clock: but if he passes many days, or even many hours, in the room, he does not continue to hear it. The clock continues its sound, but he ceases to attend to the sound, and, therefore, and not from any loss of sensation, ceases to



hear it. When he attends to it, he hears it again. The resident of the country, when he first arrives in London, is wearied at the close of each day by the numerous objects which have exercised his senses of seeing and hearing, by the noise of carriages, and the endless crowds of people : but in a few weeks he has become more frugal of his attention, and many objects of sight and hearing pass by unregarded. Dr. Fordyce observes that “a man sitting on the bench of a playhouse, had no idea of the hardness of the bench when he saw Garrick, in *Lear*, bring the body of Cordelia upon the stage.” The sensations excited by the actor in this instance took away all attention to the sensation of the hardness of the bench which the spectator sat upon, and which would undoubtedly soon excite attention, and be felt again, when the actor was gone. These effects arise from the natural incomprehensiveness of the power of attention—for, although capable of that diversified and simultaneous occupation which has been mentioned, yet, in proportion to the force with which it is directed to any one object, it is withdrawn from all other objects ; but this leads to no erroneous conclusions ; for the same man can attend to one thing at a time, can transfer his attention from one thing to another, and compare the two things with one another. It is not always easy to determine in the case of the insane man whether his sensation or

his attention be impaired ; but the effect remarked, and which may arise from either impairment, is the want of the power of comparing one object with another, and this produces the insanity in such cases.

Limited or peculiar exercise of the attention in some instances arises from, and in others is determined by, the habits and pursuits of the individual. Hogarth, we are told, and can well believe, possessed in a great degree of perfection the power of giving minute attention to circumstances connected with personal appearance, and to indications of definite traits of character, and to the expression of the human countenance. Of all these things he retained a distinct remembrance, and he gave them a new life in his productions. But we also learn that his memory was very treacherous of other things, and that he was unable to repeat even a few lines with correctness; a defect probably originating in the want of power to direct his whole attention to the task of learning any thing by heart.

A gentleman residing in a part of the country with which I am well acquainted, easy in his circumstances, and not unhappy in his family, conceived an aversion to interchanging a word with anybody whatever. He would avoid people whom he saw approaching, or leave the room when they entered it. He generally had his hands clasped before him, and used to deal much in short



exclamations, such as,—“ Lord have mercy upon us,”—“ What a wicked world this is,” and so forth. Yet this man, when circumstances compelled him into conversation, wanted none of the powers, and had lost none of the information, requisite for performing his part in it with credit. His aversion to meeting or speaking to people, was a mere aggravation of what nervous persons are very subject to : but there appeared also to be in him an inaptitude of the nervous system to be so acted upon by ordinary impressions as to attend to them ; thus in ordinary circumstances he seemed to be unconscious of what was passing, and took no part in it ; but when the impression was increased, his faculties were roused, and especially his attention, into healthy action. Attention appeared to be the faculty which particularly suffered, but as it was not reduced to a state in which it could not be roused, he was not insane.

In other instances its torpidity becomes a kind of disease. I have occasionally been consulted in cases of this kind, and they are probably not uncommon. A young lady is observed to discontinue her usual occupations ; books no longer amuse her ; she neglects her music, her drawing, and every kind of feminine work ; neglects her correspondents ; makes excuses when visiting is proposed to her ; can with difficulty be persuaded to take any exercise ; and seems to consider it the

summit of human happiness to sit by the fire, or at the window, motionless, silent, unoccupied, and abandoned to indolence. Of course, the causes of this state are very various ; some misplaced and disappointed attachment ; or vanity, or pride, may have been the commencement ; but the mental state consists at first of a sluggishness in the faculty of attention, which accounts for all the other phenomena of that class ; for as the attention is not exercised, the memory is not exercised, nor the comparison, nor the judgment. It is yet only an impairment of mind. Careful and well-timed efforts ; a visit from an unexpected friend ; change of place ; travelling ; a variety of new objects ; will often rouse the dormant faculty of attention, and with it all the rest. Too often, this malady of the attention, and general apathy, is combined with languid performance of various functions, as the digestion, the functions of the skin, uterus, &c., and some disease exists, or is induced, in the nervous system itself : in that case, after many attempts to revive the mind, with temporary success, the attempts are found to fail ; the attention can no more be roused, nor the memory or comparison exerted ; the judgment is impaired : and then we have a form of true insanity. The brain, in such instances, is brought into a state in which the ordinary stimulus of external circumstances, and of the circulating blood, fails to excite



its proper actions; and a similar cerebral condition exists in some cases of idiocy, in which the excitement of a fever, that would have amounted in others to delirium, has created a temporary power, which declined as the fever abated.\* There are lunatics of this kind who will pass years without uttering a word, or even, if they can avoid it, without moving a voluntary muscle; the body is kept motionless, and the face is as unchangeable in its expression as that of a statue.

Men of enthusiastic character frequently devote their attention to one great object, pursuing it, perhaps with indifferent success, throughout the whole of a long life; and we sometimes say of such men that they are "men of one idea." I suppose it was from a consideration of Howard's close and long continued attention to the subject of the amelioration of prisons, that Dr. Reid has said of him, "If he had not been a philanthropist he would probably have been a madman." Such great men are far removed from madness. For first, the object of their attention is deliberately and well chosen; imagination may have invested it with something more than its true importance, but they exert all the faculties of their minds upon it, and many times accomplish that which all but

\* A case of this description is related by Mr. Tuke, in his account of the Retreat at York.

themselves despaired of. On any other subject, they could have exerted the same mental power. But a man is not mad, until he has lost the power of transferring his attention from one object to another. Then he ceases to compare, and then he can no longer judge. Confinement of the attention to one subject may become the cause of an impairment of its power; and if the subject is one of a kind to leave deep impressions, the memory and imagination may also incur some defect. In the preparatory exercises, called the exercises of St. Ignatius, to which, as a kind of probation, the young priests are subjected in the Church of Spain, the attention is rigorously confined, for ten successive days, to religious and to fearful subjects of meditation, and the result has often been the loss of all cheerfulness of character, for the remainder of life.

In some cases of impaired or defective attention, we certainly find a near approach to insanity. The "great wits" who are "allied to madness" belong to this class; and show how a defective attention limits the comparison. The individuals distinguished by the appellation of great wits have commonly great facility in the discovery of resemblances. What they have attended to they remember, and what they remember they quickly recognise. They commonly go no further: they do not examine, or carefully compare; nor are



they at all heedful of differences ; and their judgment is exercised as little as possible.

I conceive, at the same time, that there is much popular error entertained concerning the connexion of talent with madness. Every county presents one or more specimens of individuals who are reputed scientific by those more ignorant of science than themselves ; eccentric men, whose wandering attention has travelled over every subject, resting nowhere long enough to gather exact information ; but who, encouraged by the applause of sounder, but slower minds, indulge in bold and free declamation concerning all parts of human knowledge ; confound the ignorant, amaze the vulgar, and even impose upon the mere scholar ; so that in the opinion of their neighbours, they become accounted “wonderfully clever men, but certainly a little mad.” The learned and benevolent Dr. Parr used to say of such men, that they were certainly *cracked* ; but that the crack *let in light* ;—and even then, it is to be feared, he estimated them too highly. Such men adopt, as true, the most improbable assertions, and believe it possible to achieve impossibilities ; they are full of discoveries, and secrets, and novel methods in art and science, in mechanics, in medicine, and in government. They torment the village apothecary and locksmith with specifics and perpetual motion, and fatigue the Chancellor of the Exchequer with

schemes for relieving the nation from debt. The explanation is, that they can attend, but not continuously; they can remember, but not always accurately; and they can compare, but resemblances only;—differences escape them; objections are hidden from them; and their conclusions are almost invariably incorrect. They follow every loose and deceptive analogy, mistake the order of phenomena, and apply the terms of one series to a collection differing from it, except in one or two parts alone. Assuredly, when such unsettled minds become altogether crazy, it is not just to lay the fault upon their learning or their genius.

Let us look, on the other hand, over the list of the great philosophers of all the countries of the world,—men whose material organization permitted the most extensive exercise of the mental faculties; the great statesmen, the great historians, the men of science and literature; and it will be acknowledged, that between minds of this rank, and the mad, there is but small connexion. Their greatness arose from the excellence of every faculty, conjoined in some with the particular vigour of one. The mad who are thought to resemble them, may often be distinguished by the predominance of one faculty, but that faculty is generally the Imagination, and it is conjoined with an imperfect exercise of attention and comparison. Even among the poets, those at least who will continue to rank



as such as long as a love of poetry remains in the world, nothing is so rare as to find actual madness, We now and then see the daring imagination almost too powerful for the other faculties, or the intensity of emotion impeding or perverting the reasoning faculty, but only for a time. In such minds a mighty struggle may take place, and the mind can bear it and survive. The life of Alfieri, and that of our own Byron, two men who seem in many respects to have had a singular resemblance to each other, present us with such examples of this kind of struggle, as to make any attempt to prove its possibility superfluous. In both, the result was the same; an eventual ascendancy of the judgment, greatness of intellectual performance, and wisdom in action; for it seems to me that both these great men were no less thus distinguished, than by the greatness of their poetical performances; and that the greatest poets, in short, of ancient, or of modern times, have generally been men who would have been distinguished in any walk of intellectual exertion. Those who, after signalling themselves as poets, have lost the use of reason, have generally been men whose circumstances and situation did not keep the faculties of their minds in healthful exercise, and, in whom, whilst the judgment was allowed to sleep, the imagination was indulged to a morbid excess.

Defect of the Comparing power is observable in the pursuits and progress of many men in all professions. The industry of such men is great, but often ill-directed: they do not distinguish trifles from things of importance, and are generally occupied about matters of little worth. In my own profession, we see such minds engaged in the prosecution of minute observations; all the larger features of pathology, all general principles of practice, escape them; but a symptom not heeded or not valued by others, or any deviation from common anatomical arrangement, or a line in the face, or a pimple on the hand, or a streak on the tongue, or a pretended specific, fills them with the anticipated delight of a discovery. They do not compare one symptom with another; they pronounce diseases to exist, which are really not present; they do not contrast the reputation of a new medicine with that of other medicines, once brought forward in the same way, and then abandoned; they do not compare effects with causes, but suppose they have cured diseases which were only imaginary, with specifics of which the virtue is equally imaginary; and thus, but in a state of continual satisfaction, they grow old without experience. These errors, and many others, to which something analogous may doubtless be found in



every department of study, arise from defective powers of comparing one thing with another.

Those whom we consider to be persons of judgment, are persons capable of accurate comparison, in all circumstances and situations: and every defect of judgment, not amounting to insanity, seems to arise from some obstruction existing in the way of this accurate comparison. The dullness of the senses, the inertness of the memory, the want of imagination, or any other impairment of any of these faculties, may impede or obstruct the faculty of comparison; and to whatever extent they do impede it, to that extent they obscure the judgment: and when this faculty cannot be exerted, in consequence of the great depravement or impairment of any of the other faculties, the mind is no longer sane.

There is an exemplification of a defect in the power or exercise of the comparison which is so common, as perhaps to seem hardly worthy of being mentioned; and which is furnished by persons who are continually finding out resemblances. Every stranger to whom they are introduced is strikingly like some friend: every building is exactly like some other building. These observers see only resemblances, in consequence of hasty and imperfect comparison: and are incapable, either naturally or as a result of mental indolence, of

making habitual distinctions. Thus what appears to arise from a quickness of the comparing power, is produced by its feebleness.

Dr. Reid relates an amusing instance of indecision, which I should account for by saying, that the comparing powers were defective; that of a patient who remained in bed all day, under the embarrassment of being unable to determine what pair of pantaloons he should put on. As soon as he had invested himself in any one pair, he began to discover reasons for preferring another. “Every thing he did, he regretted having done, and of what he had neglected to do, he regretted the omission.”—This will be recognised as nothing more than an aggravation of what we not unfrequently remark in persons of great indecision, a small degree of talent, and an ardent temperament; every day brings a change of opinion, and every change is asserted with equal vehemence; so that these persons are found to be exceedingly inconvenient in all matters of business; sometimes useful as allies by the mere force they present to the enemy, but not unfrequently, like elephants employed in war, turning round, and becoming formidable to their friends. In these persons the perceptive faculties are active, and the physical energy is considerable, but the reflective faculties have not sufficient controlling power; they can attend enough to



learn many particulars, but they do not compare the particulars with sufficient accuracy to form correct and stable judgments.\*

It is here, among the varieties of mind in which the comparing power is sluggish, that I must place most of the cases which are commonly designated as cases of Eccentricity, and the distinguishing of which from cases of actual insanity, has given occasion for so much dispute, and is indeed often difficult. Eccentricity in fact is connected with a diseased state of the comparing faculty, and any affection of that faculty brings a man nearer to the condition of a lunatic. It is often associated with diseased sensations, and we shall see that Insanity consists of a diseased state of one or more of the

\* This is not the only variety of character, of which it may occur to some of my readers, that the Phrenological system affords the best apparent explanation. The facts alluded to in the text, many of the phenomena of disease, and the observation of all mankind, seem to me to prove that the first principles of Phrenology are founded in nature. On these it is very probable that many fancies and errors may have been built: but now that anatomy and physiology have together penetrated so far into the separateness of structure and functions of the nerves, of the spinal marrow, and even of certain portions of the cerebral mass, I can see nothing which merits the praise of being philosophical in the real or affected contempt, professed by so many anatomists and physiologists, for a science which, however imperfect, has for its object the demonstration that for other functions, the existence of which none can deny, there are further separations and distinctions of hitherto unexplained portions of nervous matter.

faculties of the mind, involving a loss of the power of comparing. A very eccentric man, therefore, is always a near neighbour to the madman.

Eccentricity may be divided into two species : one, in which the departure from custom is plainly repugnant to reason ; the other, in which it is apparently reasonable. I knew a man who spent his days in bed, and invariably got up at night : this was eccentricity repugnant to reason. But if a man wears a white linen coat in July, or a very broad brimmed hat of light manufacture, it may be that the coat and hat are cooler, and therefore better, than the coats and hats commonly worn ; here is an appearance of reason, but an appearance only : for the custom of wearing a warm coat and stronger hat has really arisen from long experience of the short continuance and great uncertainty of the hot weather, in consequence of which, the linen coat and frail hat are on the whole less convenient and less suitable than a hat of beaver and a coat of woollen cloth. The general attention, memory, and comparison of the people of this country, have come to such a conclusion ; but the eccentric individual has not come to the conclusion. His attention has been unduly attracted by the sensations of a few hot days ; he has not paid the same attention to the sudden, but common, interruptions occasioned by inclement weather ; his memory and imagination revive or recall the first,



and not the last ; he decides or judges therefore, that he should accommodate his dress to the first ; and his judgment is on this point defective.

All eccentricity, then, is a departure from sound judgment ; it may be a very slight departure, but still it is a departure. It may still be contended, that the man whom I call eccentric, is in fact acting reasonably, and that the rest of mankind are acting contrary to the dictates of sound judgment. The first person who used an umbrella in London was followed about the streets by the crowd : he departed from the custom of the people. It may be asked if *he* was eccentric, and consequently if his carrying an umbrella was a departure from reason ? The answer is, no. The practice was new, and excited surprise : but so plainly reasonable that every body fell into it : insomuch that if a man were now to walk in the rain *without* an umbrella, we should justly consider such eccentricity, if voluntary, a proof of a departure from sound judgment. In both cases, then, the general custom of mankind is the rule, the departure from which constitutes eccentricity.

It will commonly be found, that eccentric persons have defects or excess of one or more of the sensations ; or that the memory is partial, and, as it were, holds only certain circumstances, the recalling of which leads to certain peculiarities of conduct ; or that the imagination has been unduly impressed

by certain accidents, the colours of which it reflects on certain parts of life, which are distinguished by eccentric actions: and in so many cases this impairment of one of the other faculties, together with a total loss of the comparing power, produces actual insanity, that we shall find numerous eccentrics unavoidably classed with lunatics, and belonging, therefore, to another chapter.

That a gentleman of rank in a learned profession, should indulge in unusual taciturnity in his hours of pleasure; should in fact not speak to his domestics above once or twice a year, but be obeyed by a system of domestic signals; is a proof of singular eccentricity, and arose probably, in the first instance, from some erroneous train of reasoning long forgotten; or perhaps from the mere habit of inattention to all common objects: but the person exhibiting this conduct is able to adopt opposite habits, and can conform in these particulars, as in others, to what the generality of mankind have agreed upon as the most convenient.

A learned clergyman falls into slovenly habits of dress, indulges in every whim that arises in his mind, and becomes remarkable for his eccentricity: but every now and then he shows that he can act like other people; and if placed in a new situation, removed, for example, from a remote living to the metropolis, he indulges in new clothes, is seen to be more particular about the brushing of his hat,



and the adjustment of his wig ; becomes reconciled to gloves, and to shoes without nails ; and, in short, conforms to the world in which he lives. The man, then, who is merely eccentric can, if he exerts himself, act rationally and leave off his eccentricity. The lunatic cannot. The eccentric man also commonly justifies his eccentricity more speciously and more calmly ; or perhaps laughs at it himself : the madman seldom justifies his peculiarities with much skill, is provoked by contradiction, and is very seldom capable of joining in a laugh which is raised against himself.

Cases there certainly are, on the boundary line between eccentricity and madness, which seem to bid defiance to definition ; but they are generally resolvable into the effects of habit in confirming trifling actions, at first performed on some insufficient grounds of reasoning. Any anxiety likely to arise from these cases is, however, at an end, when we really consider what circumstances alone can justify interference. It is repugnant to every idea of that rational freedom which all ought to enjoy, that a man should not do as he chooses with his time, or his property, so long as he does not inflict direct injury on others ; although whenever he does inflict such injury, the law must surely interpose to protect the persons injured : but the law discriminates between persons really injured and those who only imagine themselves to

be so. An old bachelor may indulge in a thousand extravagances, and imprudences, and absurd freaks, which in the father of a family would justify interference for the protection of his children. The old bachelor's conduct may be very foolish, and very wrong, and may end in the destruction of his own health or property; but I do not see how any restraint can be put upon such a man, without endangering the safety of every one who allows himself at any time to depart from formal rules of living. If the inconsistencies, the peculiarities, the minute acts of folly, of a single month, were arrayed in evidence against some very sensible persons, they would themselves be surprised to find what evidence of eccentricity their conduct had furnished: and I suppose there are few individuals who do not acknowledge to themselves, that some portion of their habitual conduct is not consistent with the dictates of their better judgment; if not in their morals, at least in some of the trifling but often recurring actions of life. The fault of the eccentric man is, that he carries this to excess in things which are conspicuous.

There is a tradition of no very ancient date, in a northern county, of which a very eccentric individual is the subject, and which may be mentioned here. A middle-aged gentleman, who had never married, was remarkable for the exactness of all his domestic arrangements, and the religious punctu-



ality with which he observed his dinner hour. The proceedings of all his household were conducted with such unfailing precision, that the effect seemed to be produced by the operation of machinery. This excellent gentleman left his house one day in his pleasure boat, and sailed to a neighbouring seaport, as he had frequently done before; ordering his dinner to be ready at the usual hour at home, and to be ready every day at the same hour until his return, if he should stay away a day or two. When he arrived at the port, a vessel was about to sail for Hamburgh, and he embarked in it, without a word of explanation spoken or written. Day after day his well disciplined servants prepared dinner for him, and he returned not. From Hamburgh he went to Frankfort, and from Frankfort to Vienna, and from Vienna to Paris, and many months elapsed before he directed his steps homeward. At last, however, his domestics had the satisfaction to see him make his appearance, and punctually at the hour of dinner; his meal being that day, as every day, quite ready for him. He entered his house with the air of a man who had only quitted it the day before, made no inquiries, and offered no explanations; and as he had no near relations or very intimate associates, this piece of oddity, like many others in which he indulged, remained unexplained to his dying day. Yet this is related of a person who never did a foolish thing in the common affairs of life, and with whose

eccentricities assuredly no one had the smallest right to interfere.

Another individual took some unpardonable offence at the sun; and from that time had his windows closed, determining to live and die by candle-light. This was merely eccentricity; a voluntary mode of action, founded on disturbed sensation, and approaching as nearly as possible to insanity; but yet not requiring or justifying restraint or compulsion.

Except as a consequence of disease, it is not usual to meet with very marked impairment of the faculty of Memory. Of its decay in old age, I shall presently speak: but in most adults it has a certain exercise, more or less useful, and more or less extensive, according to the things which have occupied the attention. Its slight impairments, in consequence of which words or names escape us, or are withheld from the speaker, are very common, and do not affect the judgment: its greater defects constitute some of the forms of absence of mind. Partial impairments of memory, of a very curious nature, have been observed after diseases affecting the brain; as the loss of a language formerly well-known. Paralysis, which enfeebles the mind as well as the body, is often seen to affect the memory: the patient wishes to ask his servant for something which is within his sight, and cannot remember its name;



or he tries to join the conversation of his friends, and forgets the words which would express his ideas. As this impairment is easily observed, it is often thought to be the only mental impairment, although all the mental faculties have suffered some injury from the disease; the attention and comparison being weakened, and the imagination oppressed.

Long before old age approaches, many individuals are sensible of an impairment of memory; and if any one cause can be pointed out with more certainty than another, I should say, that the most frequent cause of this defect was mental anxiety or disturbance. A man thus affected is very sensible of the affection; perhaps he uses artificial means to lessen it, but often finds that he forgets even what he has taken pains to remember, or what he has *determined* that he will not forget.

A gentleman of considerable attainments, after long continued attention to various subjects, found himself incapable of writing what he sat down to write; and wishing to write a cheque, could get no farther than the first two words; he found that he wrote what he did not mean to write, but by no effort could write what he intended. This impairment of his memory and attention lasted about half an hour, during which time his external senses were not impaired, but the only ideas which he had were such as the imagination dictated, without

order and without object. He knew also, during this time, that when he spoke, the words he uttered were not the words he wished to utter. When he recovered, he found that in his attempt to write the cheque, he had, instead of the words “ fifty dollars, being one half-year’s rate,” put down “ fifty dollars through the salvation of Bra—” but could not recollect what train of ideas had suggested the latter words, or what their meaning had been.\* Sir Everard Home relates an instance in which the celebrated John Hunter was affected for nearly half an hour with a loss of memory, and could not recognize the house or the street in which he was, nor even the name of the street when it was mentioned to him. But the subjects of both these cases were conscious of the temporary loss; it was not so considerable as to induce, nor was it accompanied by, a loss of the comparing power, and the understanding remained sound.

Dullness, or want of activity in the memory, in consequence of which a man does not recollect what he has formerly learnt, until it is too late to speak or too late to act, is commonly united with equal sluggishness of all the faculties. The judgment of such a man is correct, but he requires time to perform the preliminary actions of attention and

\* This case is mentioned by Dr. Crichton, in his *Inquiry into Mental Derangement*; and by Dr. Mumford, in his *Study of Medicine*, Vol. IV., p. 170.



comparison. He understands a witty remark, and detects a sophistical argument ; but his reply comes when the subject is forgotten, and his laugh begins when that of the rest of the company has ceased. This state of the faculties is consequently very inconvenient for practical and ordinary purposes, much of the wisdom of common life depending on the prompt application of what has been learnt to what is to be done. If such is the character of a public man, he is confounded by a bold opponent, whose speech he can triumphantly confute the day after : if he is a medical practitioner, he thinks, on his way home from seeing a patient, of some combination of medicine which exactly suits the case : and in society such individuals are compelled to listen to the most astounding assertions, of which they know the incorrectness, without being able, on the instant, to set the company right. As the memory is the only repository of the thoughts, the value of its stores is much diminished by such want of readiness of access, and therefore, although it has been too exclusively regarded, the care of this faculty is justly deemed essential to a well exercised mind. My own observation has not confirmed an opinion which has been frequently repeated in different books during the last ten years, that the memory is commonly only faithful with respect to peculiar impressions, as of number, of words, of form, &c., and treacherous as to the rest. It is of

course most stored with the objects which each individual has attended to ; and if it is observed to be in some retentive of words, and in others of numbers, and in others of facts, the explanation of the peculiarity is to be sought for in the manner in which the attention has been exercised in the particular cases. At the same time, the disposition to attend to certain objects, rather than to others, certainly seems to belong to the original mental constitution of the individual.

The Imagination is subject to great diversities. This wonderful faculty, the peculiar office and influence of which has been already described, and without which the mind of man would be as uninteresting as that of the lower animals, or “a vast unblessed desert; the abode of silence and inaction; lifeless, soulless, and stript of all those ornaments which make it now so various and beautiful;”\* like that cheerless waste which the Aristotelians conceived the moon to be; is subject to inequalities which often even endanger the well-being of the mental constitution. Continually in action, rapid and pervading in its flight, its errors are often only momentary; but by frequent repetition, or by long indulgence, they become serious.

A morbid activity of this faculty interferes with that steady application of the mind which is

\* Life of Galileo.—Library of Useful Knowledge.



essential for the completion of any undertaking. We read an admired author, on a subject requiring attention and thought; but a graceful expression, a lively illustration, kindles the imagination, and we are carried far away from the author and the subject; and this accident, by continual repetition, would completely suppress thought, and cause much of the time supposed to be spent in study to be merely time lost in reverie. The imagination works, in these instances, through the medium of the association of ideas: it gathers together from the boundless regions of space, and time, and sense, and memory, all that can be united by a single link of connexion or resemblance, and observes no kind of rule or order, so that the gravest, perhaps the sublimest conceptions are speedily followed by the most absurd and grotesque images. It is thus that the productions of a man possessed of great talents, but incapable of regulating this process of imagination, so often resemble the old remains of gothic architecture; and our admiration of what is grand in design and beautiful in execution, is qualified by meeting at unexpected turns and angles with a mixture of what is low and barbarous in conception, and ludicrously inconsistent with the general plan.

That men of poetical temperament should be subject to the excesses and to the diseases of the imagination, a faculty possessed by them in pecu-

liar activity, is naturally to be expected. But, as I have already said that it is a common error to consider great wits allied to madness, so it will be found that those poets, who have been the most highly gifted with imagination, have been least prone to its diseases. The eulogium of Cowley, on his lamented friend Hervey, is the true eulogium of a great poet :

“ So strong a wit did Nature to him frame,  
As all things, but his judgment, overcame;  
His judgment like the heavenly moon did show,  
Tempering that mighty sea below : ”

and Denham's expressions, when speaking in praise of Cowley himself, are equally discriminative,—

“ His fancy and his judgment such,  
Each to the other seemed too much.”

No error can be more unjust towards the whole race of poets, who deserve that high name, than to suppose them to be persons merely distinguished by imagination. It was either Steele or Addison, and either is a great authority, who, in reply to a correspondent in the *Spectator* who desired to know what was necessary to a man in order to become a great poet, replied, “that he should be a very accomplished gentleman;” and the answer, if properly understood, is no less true than it is witty and brief. With the active imagination indispensable to the poet, is conjoined a most vigilant



attention, great readiness of comparison, chiefly of resemblances, but not entirely of resemblances,—for his figures to be satisfactory must be just, as well as striking;—a memory most retentive; and a judgment highly correct, and even fastidious. Some of the great poets have already been alluded to, and I may incur censure for reverting to the subject; but any one who is acquainted with the writings and literary history of two who have not yet been mentioned by me, Virgil and Pope, will know that not a word in this description is without the support of unquestionable examples.

Insanity is generally considered to have effected a signal triumph, when it appeared in the powerful and most prolific mind of Dean Swift. But the mind of Swift, though powerful and prolific, was ardently exerted, during a great part of his life, either upon works permitting an almost unlicensed exercise of the imagination, and in which nothing, if it proved witty, could be deemed absurd; or wasted, according to the whim of the moment, upon mere trifles: it was never devoted, for any length of time, to a great work which called for a regular and persevering exercise of the reasoning and judging faculties; and many hours and days seem to have been yielded up to what Johnson has called, “debauchery of the mind;” an indulgence of the pleasure arising from the creation of fantastic images, or the devising of extravagant

incidents. Thus his attention ran wild and unrestrained, and his strong imagination gained by degrees entire possession of him, exercising, almost unresisted, all the power which that faculty has been stated to possess : his judgment became habitually foiled, and eventually weakened, by his morbid sensations, by his prejudices, by his ungoverned passions, and by a peculiar and hateful misanthropy ; and it is charitable to say, that some of his inhuman eccentricities were the beginning of his madness.

It is not, then, the imagination that is allied to madness, but its excess, in minds unendowed with a proportionate share of the other faculties ; and the reason is, that this excess impedes just comparison, furnishing another example of an impaired judgment, or an unsound mind, consisting of the impairment or loss of one or more of the faculties of the mind, accompanied with the loss of the comparing power.

Few men are so happily constituted as not to find, that the imagination is exposed to frequent temporary impairment, when any passion is called into vehement action. Resentment excites the imagination to dress detested objects or persons in odious and extravagant colours : their faults are magnified ; and even their good actions are looked upon as faults in disguise. The affections, on the other hand, array every beloved object in the



colours of faultless beauty, and the very errors of those we admire seem but the excesses of an amiable and sensitive mind. To feelings so opposite, and to both in quick succession, the imagination lends its power. Friendship which seems as if it would last for ever, is "within an hour" succeeded by coldness, derision, aversion, hatred; and the very circumstances which were the aliment of pleasure and attachment, become the food of disgust. In all these cases, the imagination, roused by an ungoverned or an unhappy passion, is in diseased excess; and the power of exercising just comparison is so nearly destroyed, that we are actually on the limits of insanity, on the subject which engrosses us.—But we are often rather unwilling than unable to make just comparisons, and are conscious of the injustice even of those feelings in which we indulge. It is only when the power of comparing is actually *lost*, that the insanity declares itself, and that the disappointment of a lover, or the fancied wrongs of a neglected favourite, seek gratification or redress in crime.

The Imagination is materially concerned in effecting what is called the Association of Ideas. Its activity causes sounds and images to be brought up in quick succession, whenever any sound or image happens to be present which has the slightest connexion with others; and, where the activity is excessive, matter of association is of course

never wanting. It is to this that we are indebted for most of the charm of conversation, as distinguished from prosing; when every subject in turn gains a little attention, and yields to another, which some word or observation of one of the interlocutors recalls to the mind of another. The conversation of an individual commonly shows how far the faculty of association is exercised. One man adheres to his subject, enters fully into detail, supposes his hearers as destitute of imagination as himself, and is never content to make a brief allusion, but must describe every thing; this man belongs to the fearful family of proser. But there are other branches of the family, in whom the imagination is too active and vagrant: these fly from subject to subject, still contriving "in one weak, washy, everlasting stream," to sustain continuousness of talk; and inflict as much suffering on the hearer, as the heavier plodder who completely exhausts one topic before he removes his sluggish faculties to another. Offenders of this kind would be much surprised to learn, that they really deflect a little from sound mind towards insanity: but the lunatic asylum shows us the excess of the faults of both, in the wretched man whose dead imagination offers no image to relieve him from the intolerable pressure of one insane idea; and in the happier lunatic, whose words flow on, through every possible variety of subjects,



mingling the past and present, without order, system, or sense, from morning until night.

There is in many persons a visible want of imagination, which entails no serious consequences. It deprives them of the power of deriving pleasure from the works of writers of imagination, or of succeeding in any pursuit requiring the exercise of fancy; but as they are generally quite unable to comprehend the pleasures which they are denied, they suffer nothing from their loss. I have sometimes been amused to observe the difficulty with which such persons get through the reading of an ordinary letter, written in a somewhat difficult hand: in their minds, no word, or part of a sentence, seems to suggest the possible nature of those which immediately succeed, and to decypher is to them a task of more difficulty than it would be to others to translate. They unriddle each word by itself, like an hieroglyphic character; not being supplied with instantaneous conjectures concerning the meaning of what follows. A more serious disadvantage arising from the want of imagination is, that it endangers too great an attachment of the attention to one pursuit, or to one idea, which may become a mental disease.

Although our mental associations are revived by the imagination and memory with extreme rapidity, they are yet often the foundation of our opinions of things and persons, and the source, consequently,

of many of our actions. When we say that we are attracted by any one's discourse, or by the expression of his features, or when we say we have an instinctive dislike to a man, we are often unable to trace the particulars of the association from whence our regard or aversion arises; and the feeling appears to us to be almost unavoidable. If, however, we desire to act justly towards others, we subject these feelings to examination, and to just comparison, and are careful not to leave our opinions to be determined by chance. The association may be a just one; in which case examination confirms it: but it is often unjust, and then our examination corrects it; so that the actions arising out of these associations, which may happen to be wise or foolish, may be regulated by our judgment. We may be too indolent to take this trouble; and we may consequently act foolishly and unjustly, or even wickedly, in conformity to the association; but so long as the association of ideas is not beyond our power of suspension and revision, we are not mad: we can examine it, we can exercise our attention and comparison upon it, and correct our erroneous judgment, and amend our foolish, or unjust, or wicked conduct. When the association of ideas is so involuntary, so imperative and uncontrollable, that we cannot command it, cannot revise and correct it, cannot in fact exercise our comparison concerning those



ideas or feelings which constitute it, or which arise out of it, *then* we have lost our reason; then the faculty of imagination is in morbid excess, the power of attention is impaired, and comparison being no longer exercised, we are mad concerning that particular association of ideas. One of the most common phenomena of insanity is this submission of the mind to a morbid association, respecting the motives of friends and relatives. Insanity is deferred for a time, and the individual is conscious of the error, though hardly able to resist it. He reasons with himself; that is, he compares his morbid feelings with whatever is calculated to counteract them; and he decides against himself, and accuses himself of unkindness. But, by degrees, the imagination contributes more and more to overpower him; he no longer makes just comparisons, and he indulges in the most unjust dislike of his kindest friends, or in absolute hatred of his most affectionate relatives.

A great part of the business of education, in its largest sense of moral as well as intellectual culture, is to form just associations of ideas; and to prepare the mind to form them for itself. Rapid as the process of association seems to be, and as if involuntary, it is controllable, and may in all important things be governed by processes of attention and comparison; though in many cases, the attention and comparison being slight, the associa-

tion is not correct in proportion to its strength. To form good associations of ideas is to examine the resemblances and differences of ideas; and although associations may chance to be useful which have been hastily formed, they can only be rendered certainly so by being formed with care. The most ordinary thoughts, words, and actions, those to which every waking moment gives birth, are intimately connected with certain rapid decisions of the judgment, either effected by swift operations of the attention and comparison at the time, or by such operations made at a former time, of which the results have been certain associations, by which we are no less strongly impelled. To correct these associations, when they are of a nature to influence the performance of our duty, is of course most essential to correctness of conduct. To associate phenomena in their true order, forms a large part of what we call science; and to associate all ordinary phenomena with such trains of habitual thought or reflection as may secure a habit of useful exertion, is no inconsiderable part of wisdom.

Defect of one or more of the mental faculties might be illustrated by a thousand examples, taken almost at hazard from the specimens afforded in every society of men. We meet with many individuals of great activity, who attain a kind of distinction by dint of exertion, in whom the chief



mental faculties are attention and memory; and whose powers of comparing are very feeble. Such persons are indefatigable in learning, and in repeating what they have learnt; but they are never original, or, in anything requiring judgment, at all to be depended upon. Having little imagination, they are not harassed with views of unattainable perfection, but are satisfied with their own performances; and, attempting nothing great, imagine that whatever they attempt they can accomplish. If the imagination has a little exercise in such minds, it either follows a short way in the course of those whose flight is higher, or contents itself with weaving flimsy theories, which only live until they are expressed in words; or in forming some new, and generally some incorrect, combination of old thoughts. This character of mind, which is merely fitted for the every-day business of a common station, and which converts the occupations of the highest station into common business, is now and then enlivened, oddly enough, by a sort of universal ambition; and the individual, so compounded, spends his life in continual efforts to be distinguished; floats upon the passing wonder of the day, or the accepted theories of his time; either striving to seem to guide the stream which commands him, or opposing, with energy and fire, opinions to which most people have some time before ceased to pay much attention.

Society abounds also with individuals whose sensations are acute, and who have an intimate acquaintance with all the common circumstances of life, men who perform common duties actively and accurately, but whose faculties are quite unequal to any duty requiring accurate comparison, or even memory and imagination. These are the great instruments by which greater intellects act upon the mass of their fellow-creatures ; and are so numerous, that no fear is more idle than that of the order of society being much disturbed by the most extensive diffusion of education. If to this character of mind we suppose the addition of a very retentive memory, we have an individual capable of making enormous acquisitions, but incapable of adding any thing from his own thoughts : one who may become a great scholar, but not one who will ever obtain that influence over his fellow-men which arises from superior wisdom. If the purpose and objects of education had not, by those accustomed to the common modes of it followed in many public institutions, been supposed to be nearly limited to the cultivation of memory, it would have occurred to the opponents of education that there was something more to be learnt than all could learn, and that there were uses of learning which only a few would ever discover. As far as equality depends on the mere acquisition of other men's thoughts, education may easily produce equality ;



and thus far, a general education may be a just ground of alarm to those who mistake mere acquisition for knowledge: but the knowledge which has been said to be power, comprehends what cannot be taught, and what very few can attain of themselves. It demands something more than mere quickness of sense, and retentiveness of memory; and requires, in addition, such an accuracy of comparison, with an imagination so vigorous and at the same time so restrained, that even if the combination should prove to be common, the very wisdom resulting from it would prevent the possibility of a proper education, or exercise of such minds, proving any thing but a blessing to society and to the world.

We often see individuals whose credulity is so remarkable, that any fiction gains a temporary credit with them; and repeated experience of deception fails to protect them from new inventions. These are always persons who in common language are destitute of judgment, and who are so in reality. They labour for the most part under a natural incapacity of comparing facts and circumstances with such as have been previously known to them, so as to detect the inconsistency of some with the general constancy of others. It would seem also, that the memory of such persons is not vigorous. Such a disposition is not incompatible with great acquisitions, the mere power of acqui-

sition calling for little or no exercise of the judgment. Nothing is more common than to find persons of great learning singularly credulous with respect to medicine or to religion. The opposite character to this is that of the suspicious man : but whilst credulity generally borders on imbecility, the erroneous impressions and false reasoning of the suspicious man more frequently give to his character of mind the darker colour of insanity.

Closely allied to the credulous man is the Projector ; a being who has within him indestructible sources of happiness. He lives on a single hope for many months, but it is the hope of wealth, and fame, and power : the hope is at last instantaneously destroyed, and destroyed for ever ; another friendly delusion supplies its place, alike makes the deluded man happy for a season, and then yields to some other dream. A man of this character lives in a world of his own : his thoughts are not other men's thoughts ; he has a secret of which they are ignorant ; a key to that for which the crowd about him is toiling, but of which not one of the crowd is informed. Whoever has amused himself with noticing the varieties of men's characters, must have met with persons of this kind, who are commonly very inoffensive, possessed of strong feelings and a warm imagination, which so interfere with the perfect comparison of past experience and present hopes, as extremely to weaken



the judgment. In such persons, the powers of comparison are only weakened, not lost; and on subjects concerning which their feelings and imagination take no particular interest, they are capable of rational thought and action. This peculiarity of character may present varieties, however, the extremes of which approach more and more nearly to the confines of insanity; and when any subject so engrosses them as to lead to ruinous experiments, and obstinate perseverance in what all but themselves see to be a hopeless pursuit, then it is commonly observed that they are "mad upon *that* point," and the common observation is justified: for upon that point the comparing powers seem incapable of exercise, in consequence of a want of attention to certain facts and reasonings which would convince the projector of his folly; and then, on that point, he is unquestionably not of sound mind.

Certain individuals are observed to go through the world stamped with invariable absurdity, yet not mischievous or inconvenient enough to be treated as madmen. They were silly at school, and imprudent in youth; they are weak-minded in adult age, or imbecile beyond usual imbecility as life declines. In their modes of dress, in the regulation of their expenses, in the objects of their pursuit, in the objects of their affection, in the management of their families, in the education of

their children, in their political and religious opinions, even in the houses which they build, or the carriages which they drive, there is still the same indication of inalienable folly. In such minds the mental faculties are all feeble, but the comparing power is especially so. Every silly, and vain, and trifling action, every indication of absurd ambition, is the result of an opinion which the individual has formed concerning it; and he generally thinks himself a person in no degree inferior, if not actually superior in talent to his neighbours. He often suffers for his folly, but he never becomes wise: he sometimes sees, when it is too late, that he has been wrong, but he never gets right. If he could compare one thing justly with another, things past with the things proposed, this could not be; but he cannot compare: perhaps things may make no lasting impression upon him, are imperfectly attended to, and faintly remembered; but the inconvenience of these defects is still that they prevent his possessing materials for just comparison; and therefore his judgment is always defective, and his actions are always injudicious.

A very curious form of impaired mind is now and then met with in individuals who, without any particular want of principle, and often without assignable motive, are disposed to exaggerate every thing; have a certain fondness for embellishment which interferes with the truth of what they



narrate; a disposition to indulge the imagination, combined with an indifference to fact and reality; or make an involuntary and constant commixion of what has passed through a wandering mind with what has really passed before their sight. These may seem to be expressions unnecessarily remote from the very plain one, of such persons being addicted to lying; but the exaggerations and inventions of such people are different in many respects from common lying, for the purposes of immediate advantage; and seem to be often quite involuntary. This disposition is now and then seen, like any other mental peculiarity, to pervade a whole family; and is certainly very seldom, if indeed it be ever, combined with any great degree of perfection in the intellectual faculties. I have known remarkable instances of it in habitual drunkards, in their brief intervals of sobriety: and it is not at all uncommon in lunatics. Those in whom it is a mere propensity are not unconscious of their own exaggerations, and if reminded of them, as if they were exercises of their wit, will even acknowledge them. They have not lost the power of comparing what they say with what is true, and with what they remember: they are therefore persons whose minds are only impaired; in whom there is a defect which does not amount to what we commonly call insanity. The intellectual actions on which an adherence to truth

depends, if we may so speak, are weak, but not lost. Between them and the lunatic who delights in lying and exaggeration, there is some difference: the latter cannot suspend his romantic details, either cannot remember what is true, or has lost the power of uttering it: he is overcome by the suggestions of fancy, which mix themselves with all that he endeavours to say, and he cannot distinguish what is real from what is unreal; he cannot perceive the difference between truth and falsehood, he cannot compare the facts of one with the inventions of the other; and this loss of comparison, supervening on the mental impairment, removes him from the class of men of sound mind, and constitutes him a lunatic.

In surveying all these varieties of weakness in the human intellect, with all the aggravations of which they become capable, from slight impairment to hopeless disease, every man, I imagine, may recognise in a more permanent form some of the transient imperfections of his own nature.

The extravagant indulgence and dominion of hope, of fear, of anger, of despair, and all the terrible revelations of the madhouse, do but exhibit the more intense and permanent existence of emotions and of errors which have, at some time or other, predominated in the observer himself: and with reference to the last variety which has been mentioned, even the exaggerations of the lunatic



cannot but remind most men of their occasional disposition to heighten the interest of subjects, concerning which they suspect the hearer of an inclination to be somewhat indifferent. In the medical profession, it is no uncommon circumstance to be required to listen to the long details of cases, which the narrator considers to be indicative of a skill and activity very rarely equalled; and I presume other professions and occupations furnish opportunities for the same pleasure in him who relates, and the same suffering in him to whom the wonders are related. The wards of a lunatic asylum present us with an amusing reflection of the same particulars, very slightly magnified. A medical lunatic relates that he rode more miles, bled and cured more patients, attended more labours, and killed more horses, than all the rest of the practitioners of his county put together. A lunatic lawyer tells you that he has baffled the ingenuity of rogues, whom no one else could circumvent; has opposed counsellors, contradicted judges, and overpowered juries. A mad soldier has fought and bled more than all the soldiers who have fought and bled since the days of Alexander. Even a mad bailiff delights to tell how he insinuated himself through doors and barred gates, and baffled all the caution of evasive debtors. Most of these persons will also boast of having the finest houses, and the finest horses and carriages in the world; and these boastings certainly

constitute a kind of satire upon the common conversation of numerous individuals whose sanity is never called in question.

With each peculiarity of character, will be found some peculiarity of mind, some deficiency or inequality in certain faculties ; and as such deficiency more or less impairs the comparing power, it brings the individual more or less near to the state of unsound mind ; and exposes him to the danger of insanity, whenever circumstances occur of a nature to act upon his mental imperfection. Even the obstinate and wrong headed man, who, having formed an opinion is not open to information and conviction, and embarrasses or spoils whatever affairs he becomes engaged in, is a man of powers of mind extremely limited ; unable to exercise the power of comparison, so as to detect differences : and unites with this mental limitation a great share of vanity. If he take advice, it is like Sir Abel Handy, when he has made up his mind, “ because then it can do him no harm :” but his opinions are unsound, and may become highly inconvenient, or dangerous.

A medical witness will never be secure from error, if he forgets that Insanity is often but a mere aggravation of little weaknesses, or a prolongation of transient varieties and moods of mind, which all men now and then experience ; an exaggeration of common passions and emotions, such as



fear, suspicion, admiration; or a perpetuation of absurdities of thought or action, or of irregularities of volition, or of mere sensation, which may occur in all minds, or be indulged in by all men, but which are cherished and dwelt upon only by a mind diseased; a mind in which, together with the impairment of sensation, or of any mental faculty, there is (induced by that impairment, or not) a loss of the power of making just comparisons. The antipathies and aversions to things and persons which affect all men at some time or other, which are associated with some almost forgotten uneasiness, or arise out of the unavoidable knowledge acquired of the infirmities of character of those with whom we are most familiar, are retained in the mind of him whose comparing power is weakened; an undue importance becomes attached to trifles, and from such slight beginnings proceed, first, various eccentricities of conduct, and then insane actions. The various gradations of mental peculiarity, up to confirmed madness, may be observed even in the same family. In one, eccentricity without any visible impulse or motive, but mere love of contrariety and oddity; in another, a perverse pleasure in giving pain and uneasiness to other persons; in a third unreasonable devotion to useless learning; in a fourth a morbid sensibility to impressions; in a fifth violent and impetuous conduct; in a sixth, indications of poetical talent; and

in several of these, at certain intervals, short fits of insanity, with which perhaps some other member of the family is found to be more permanently affected.

In one member of a family we see decided mania, requiring restraint. In another occur paroxysms of irrationality; or of ungovernable passions kept in restraint by accidental circumstances, or by the control of some very influential and strong-minded relative. In a third, peculiar modifications of sensation; undue alarm on the subject of health, or of housebreaking, combined with those irregular performances of the ganglionic, involuntary, or mixed functions (intestinal contractions and respiratory offices), to which we give the name of *Hysteria*. In a fourth, merely an eccentricity, a disregard for the ordinary customs of society, but combined with strict propriety of conduct in all material things: perhaps with some virtuous feeling carried to excess. There is not one of these individuals who might not be proved insane by some definition of insanity: but the only one who is really insane, is that one by whom correct comparison is no longer made, and whose thoughts, words, and actions, result from the erroneous decisions that are thus produced. Some of the thoughts, and words, and actions, of the *eccentric* person, it may be said, result from erroneous decisions and imperfect comparison. Such thoughts,



words, or actions, are doubtless irrational; and if the individual cannot correct them, they are proofs of insanity; but only to the extent to which they themselves reach. A rich man may fancy that the wearing out of his carriage wheels will ruin him; or a man fond of what is new, may buy a new lash to his whip every morning: but these oddities, which may be traced to certain transient fancies, known to all men, and only exaggerated in these individuals, do not indicate general unsoundness of mind.

Many individuals, who conduct themselves rationally in the society in which they are restrained by the habits of social life, and by the necessity of paying some regard to the feelings and wishes of those about them, would, if freed from these restraints, become guilty of many extravagances and eccentricities. Habit has so much, and reason so little, to do with men's every-day actions, that the control exercised by the circumstances in which they live is almost unperceived by them. We find eccentricity in all classes of life, but still almost invariably in those who are better off than others of their class: even an eccentric cobbler is commonly tolerably easy in his circumstances, before his eccentricity attracts much notice from his wondering neighbours; and the rich and the powerful become eccentric from indulging desires which those who are not rich or powerful cannot

indulge: they do what others only wish to do; for all men are fond of ease, earnest in the pursuit of gratification, and require new forms of pleasure. The advantage of being unable to follow the mere bent of inclination is, that it often protects men from absurd and criminal gratifications, and compels them to seek gratification by exertion and by obtaining the favour of society. If the reader bears in mind the situation of an eccentric man when he has become shut up among lunatics, he will see with what force these observations, if they contain any portion of truth, apply against a system of treatment which excludes the patient from all sources of wholesome restraint.

The examples which have been given may serve to show how each of the faculties of the mind may be impaired, and impaired without insanity: and, at the same time, that when the impairment of any of them, or of any one of them, is such as to superinduce an inability to perform the act of comparison, or is accompanied with the loss of this faculty, insanity is the direct and inevitable result; that the decisions are then no longer correct, that the judgment is then no longer sound, that the actions are then no longer rational. So complete a change, however, is not very commonly made all at once. Frequent inequalities of mind, and a long series of periodical intervals of excitement and depression often precede it. These alternations



may be perceived in most minds subjected to any particular causes of anxiety or agitation; they become more marked as the mind becomes weaker; and they remain perceptible even when the mind has for the most part sunk into idiocy. Every now and then there is a better day, more vivacity, a delusive appearance of reaction which looks as if it might go on to recovery: but the light is deceptive, and soon disappears. The same unequal progress towards mental decline is observable in many cases which end in insanity: slight peculiarities, or excitement, or depression, occasional irritations and violence, transient suspicions, and alienations from friends, will show that now and then the control of the judgment is weakened; and that, in common language, "the mind is going;" but the patient will recover himself again and again, until by multiplied repetitions, the understanding is seriously and more permanently disturbed.

Although I attempt to take the affections of the different faculties in some kind of order, I must remark, that without a preponderating weakness, or any impairment, of any one faculty in particular, there may be a general weakness of all the faculties; a state of cerebral organization permitting no alacrity of sense, or depth of emotion; no strength of attention, or vigour of memory, or force of imagination; a state in which the power of

comparing is limited and feeble, and the judgment necessarily weak. Many such minds pass through the common business of the world without much inconvenience to those possessing them ; who readily submit to the influences to which they happen to be exposed, and are good or bad as it may happen, but never very good or very bad ; and only exposed to signal failure or disgrace when some unfortunate accident places them in responsible and conspicuous situations. When men of this low rank of intellect are possessed of fortune, and of advantageous station, it sometimes happens that the absence of ordinary circumstances of control, or the flattery of dependants, encourages them to such open acts of absurdity as cause their intellectual state to be inquired to, and a suspicion of insanity to be attached to them. Cases of this kind have now and then given some embarrassment to medical practitioners ; but the question of their sanity turns wholly upon the degree of their imbecility. These cases are never proper cases for confinement, although the care of the property or even of the person of the individual is often necessary. The want of mental power may be combined with some inordinate sensation, or with irregular passions, and the individual may sink from one degree of vice to another, from gallantry to grossness, or from intemperance to abandoned drunkenness ; cases certainly justifying some interference, and in which



interference would not be objected to by the community, provided a proper distinction were made between such cases and insanity: for although all would, or ought to shrink from treating such an unfortunate individual, however lost and depraved, as an actual madman, and from confining him among mad people, it is the interest of all that such highly inconvenient moral faults should be restrained by the legislator, and efficient protection given to relations, to females more especially, and to children, whom the profligate imbecility of a father, a husband, or a brother, often disgraces and afflicts, and sometimes irretrievably ruins. A great degree of liberty, quite sufficient for much enjoyment of a man's property, may be consistent with a limitation of his access to intoxicating liquors, or to women of vicious character; and if such interference were never made without flagrant cause, it is difficult to see who could have any just reason to complain of it.\* The state of such abandoned men is that in which a morbid sensation urges them to intoxication, or other vice; concerning which they cannot exercise a just com-

\* Dr. Beck informs us, that in the state of New York there is a statute, which places the property of habitual drunkards under the care of the Chancellor, in the same manner as that of Lunatics. The application is made by the overseers of the poor, and the person complained of has a right of appeal, on exercising which his case is investigated. Mr. Dunlop, one of the Editors

parison ; and as far as relates to that sensation and the habits arising out of it, they are unquestionably mad. To check the mad propensity is as allowable as to check any other mad propensity, and does not, or ought not to imply a complete and cruel, because unnecessary restraint. The man of sound mind, who feels any bad habit creeping upon him, makes an effort, and casts it off for ever. The man of feeble mind gives way to it ; and if that care is not taken of him which he cannot take of himself, he must be ruined and lost.

Opposed to this imbecile condition of mind is that of increased susceptibility, which in some is the result of original organization, and in others produced by various accidental causes. The sensations are too acute ; the attention vivid, but hurried ; the memory and imagination are too active ; the affections and passions are intense ; and the judgment more rapidly than accurately exercised. Alive to every mental impression, every day brings a change of mental character, and the very countenance varies so much at different times as hardly to appear the same. These are the

of the English editions of Dr. Beck's excellent work on Medical Jurisprudence, adds, that by the Roman law, a notorious spendthrift was put under guardianship ; and by the law of Scotland, a man who from facility of temper, drunkenness, or other cause, is liable to be stripped of his property, has the power of putting *himself* under trustees.—*Beck's Medical Jurisprudence*, edited by Dr. Darwall, p. 252.



persons who are distinguished by their irritability ; which in some is the result of original constitution, in many the mere product of self-indulgence, and in some the temporary effect of corporeal disturbance. An engrossing passion, a disturbed digestion, an irregular circulation in the brain, may each produce it. It is seen united with great mental activity, in those disposed to hydrocephalus, to paralysis, to apoplexy, to epilepsy, to mania, and is sometimes the product, often the precursor, of these dreadful disorders. Such a state of mind is unfavourable to sleep, and want of sleep is often seen to precede such mental disorders as are characterised by great irritation. Notwithstanding the excited state of the mind, its real power is not increased : the attention cannot be calmly and perseveringly given to any subject ; what is read is read hastily, and impatiently ; what is suggested to the mind is seldom in such a state fully and plainly written, but perhaps briefly noted as the matter for future composition ; the pen of the writer moving too slowly for the proper expression of his tumultuous thoughts.

Like other mental irregularities, this excitement, or this erythimal state, to use a word familiar to medical readers, is a departure from sound mind ; and the question of a person's sanity who is so affected, is also a question which turns wholly on

the degree of such departure. Is it, in any particular case, so great as to prevent the exercise of just comparisons, and to lead to irrational actions? If it is, the individual is, with respect to those actions, insane. But are the actions merely impetuous follies? or are they dangerous? The propriety of interference depends wholly upon the answer to be given to *these* questions. The direction of such a mind is important, for every stimulus acts upon it, every passion excites it, and whilst in one they lead to generosity and valour, in another they urge to wild ferocity and crime. In the same person, at different periods, or in different circumstances, is thus produced conduct apparently inconsistent, but naturally arising out of a general susceptibility to every feeling. Such individuals are a constant source of uneasiness to those who regard them, and an enigma to those who only see the proofs of their fickleness. They are zealous friends, or even indiscreet, but not capable of steady attachment: and they are revengeful and unscrupulous in their animosities. This inconstancy of character may play within an extensive range without insanity; but the separate actions, by which it is evinced, approach to what is irrational; and the wavering and inconstant mind itself is certainly allied to that which is insane. In its slightest form, and that which is the least



possible deviation from sound mind, it has often been described as the female character, "*varium et mutabile semper* ;"

"And variable as the shade,  
By the light quivering aspen made ;"

and the minds of some women present the most striking illustrations of it. Yet it is not peculiar to the sex. It is seen in the character of many men who are eager in every pursuit, but attached to none ; acting under every impulse, and to none constant ; rambling from study to study, until their minds resemble those once unvalued manuscripts of ancient authors, which fell into the hands of monks ; containing, it may be, some valuable matter, but so crossed and scrawled over with fancies and conceits, as to be with much difficulty legible.

## CHAPTER VI.

MODIFICATIONS OF INTELLECTUAL ACTIVITY AND POWER  
BY VARIOUS STIMULI.

IN the two constitutions just described, that of the man of weak mental faculties, and that of him in whom they are too active, the difference is, that no stimulus can rouse the first to more than very imperfect and limited action, whilst every stimulus produces too much action in the second. Between these two states, and differing from both, are to be found many mental constitutions, which seem to be sensible to various kinds and various degrees of stimulus, and often to particular kinds and degrees of stimulus only; some being torpid, and others hurried and incapable of exertion, excepting when the proper stimulus is applied; the stimulus sometimes converting a man who passed for a weak and undecided person, into a being capable of exercising the calmest courage, or prompt and sagacious decision; or proving a man, who seemed dead to every feeling, to be capable of great and glorious achievements. Among the varieties of the mind, these cannot properly be passed over.

The recent history of our own country has



presented an instance of a monarch, justly revered for every English virtue, whose habitual manner and common conversation furnished ready matter of ridicule to the witty and the wicked ; but who, on occasions of ceremony, and in situations of danger, comported himself with all the dignity belonging to his birth and station. Sir William Yonge, who lived in the reign of George II., afforded an example of a man, who, in ordinary circumstances, was thought to pass for less than half his real value, being guilty of many imprudencies and follies, and only wise when strongly required to think or to act. Sir Robert Walpole used to say of him, that “nothing but Yonge’s character could keep down his parts, and nothing but his parts support his character.” He is described as having been “vain, extravagant, and trifling ; simple out of the house, and too ready at assertions in it. His eloquence, which was astonishing, was the more extraordinary, as it seemed to come upon him by inspiration ; for he could scarce talk common sense in private, on political subjects, on which, in public, he could be the most animated speaker.” No one who has felt and admired the poetry of the Traveller, and the inimitable simplicity of the Vicar of Wakefield, can be uninterested in the very curious illustration presented by the author of these charming productions. His general conversation seems to have been an odd

mixture of great effort, and no small degree of absurdity ; his vanity, which might really be called childish, could derive extreme satisfaction from the circumstance of his having a new plum-coloured coat on ; and the praise of the *fantoccini*, if it did not prevent his sleep, at least made him emulous of showing the same degree of agility. Yet, what author can be named, who has given more unquestionable and exquisite proofs of possessing the most precious endowments of mind, than Dr. Goldsmith.

A more painful instance of this mental peculiarity was presented to public attention, about thirteen years ago, in the person of an officer of high rank, who had on many occasions distinguished himself in the service of his country ; but who, in a time of peace, and in the absence of any animating occupation, was guilty of very indecorous singularities, which were well explained, I think, in the following apology of one of his friends : “ The impression on my mind always has been, (confirmed by many collateral proofs,) that when his mind” (*that of the officer in question*) “ was not worked up to subjects of importance, or under the influence of some grand occupation and restraint, it fell, from a natural irregularity or disease, into that sort of want of control, which, though it did not amount to decided insanity, had almost every feature of that dreadful malady.”



The truth is, that the mind was insane; certain morbid sensations prevailed over the power of attention and comparison, so far as to prevent sound judgment on particular points; but the insanity was not so complete as to prevent its exertion on subjects unconnected with, or in the absence of, these morbid sensations. Many cases of eccentricity admit the same explanation. The manifestation is different in different cases, but the state of mind is the same; and the extreme cases are, as I have said, on the boundary line between eccentricity and madness. They sometimes pass beyond it; and they require a certain measure of superintendence and restraint, when they are characterised by actions which are involuntary, and hurtful or disgraceful to the individual himself, or to others.

It is not only charitable to believe that many inconsistencies and weaknesses, in the characters of those whom we find it difficult wholly to respect notwithstanding they often act so as to excite our admiration, arise rather from this species of want of perfect moral control over themselves, than from any propensity to vice; but it is also probable that such is often the true explanation. All men are more the creatures of circumstance, than those who most value themselves on the equal tenor of their conduct are willing to allow, or even than they suspect; and the circumstances, which

exercise an influence over them, are often such as would at the first view seem inadequate to produce the long train of effects to which they really give rise.

A man accustomed to business, and possessed of an active mind, and who has lived amid the excitements of a large city and a numerous acquaintance, if suddenly removed from such a kind of life to a country house, or to a country town, finds that by far the worst part of the change consists in the removal of an excitement, the effects of which were not fully known to him before. Withdrawn in a great degree from external objects, the attention becomes strongly and almost continually directed inwards; a state which has sometimes been considered as affording opportunity for a review of past conduct and the formation of good resolutions, but in which, in reality, the mind, if not wholly occupied concerning the faults of others, generally dwells on its own movements and its own feelings, until the importance of both becomes exceedingly exaggerated. This state proves to many quite unfavourable to the quiet pursuit of science or literature; the imagination has an irregular exercise; and indolence produces self-reproach and despondency. A suspicion begins to be felt that the mind has not only lost its habit of activity, but also its power to undertake any employment demanding perseverance. The want of external excitement



comes at last to be made up for by various sources of mental agitation, which are only rendered important by continuance or frequent succession; and it is found with surprize, that the facility once possessed of profiting by short intervals of leisure is supplanted by an inability to do any thing well when there is nothing to be done. In such a situation, the declension of the mind may be observed, from activity to indolence, and from indolence to that state of apathy which is very little removed from a state of sleep. Even a devotion to the common pleasures of sense is better than such a state of absolute indifference; for if even these give no kind of pleasure, whilst all higher pursuits are neglected, there is danger lest a man become of the same opinion as Dr. Darwin's patient, "that all which life affords is a ride out in the morning, and a warm parlour and a pack of cards in the afternoon;" and like him, finding these pleasures not inexhaustible, should shoot himself because he has nothing better to do.

It fortunately happens, that the majority of those who reside in the country are sufficiently occupied in the care and improvement of their property, in active rural sports, or in various social and public duties which furnish some excitement. Those who have not such cares to occupy them, or who have no pleasure in field sports, or who are not in a station calling for active public duties, often exem-

plify the great dependence of the mind on external circumstances.—The gallant officer becomes distinguished by the oddity of his attire, and the singularity of his manners; the man of fashion becomes the mere terror of trespassers and vagrants; and many, in an attachment to frivolous modes of destroying time, or even to debasing pleasures, fall into errors of conduct from which the stimulus of busy engagements would have preserved them; for no popular opinion is more incorrect, than that which maintains the favourableness of a country life to the cultivation of virtue. In such inactivity, the intellect stagnates, and the very affections run to waste. Many who have retired from the bustle of the world, to enjoy, as they believed, the felicity of retirement, have found by sad experience, that the government of themselves was more difficult in solitude than in society; and have discredited, by the weakness and follies of their latter years, the better actions and aspirations of their youth and manhood.

Even amidst the excitement of the capital, the want of those continual motives to industry which arise from a profession, or from some regular pursuit in life, or from the necessity of making some provision for others, or from any of those privations and difficulties of which the operation is always beneficial, though seldom duly appreciated, is most fatal to mental ease. A condition which



most men would choose, because apparently including every blessing of nature and fortune, has been known to become tormenting and intolerable. The possession of wealth and rank, a liberal education, great literary acquirements, many accomplishments, correctness of life, elegance of manners, and extraordinary powers of conversation, together with the frequent enjoyment of a society in which all these particulars are fully estimated, present a combination of advantages which very few possess, and to which none can be indifferent : if any thing could promise worldly happiness, such a combination of natural and acquired endowments would seem to do so. They were never perhaps more happily united than in the instance of Mr. Topham Beauclerk, the friend and frequent companion of Johnson, by whom, as indeed by all the great men of a time in which great men abounded, he was not only admired but beloved. Yet we are told that the activity or the restlessness of his mind required something more ; and that, sometimes unsatisfactorily engaged in desultory studies, and sometimes in dissipation, and sometimes in play, he was too often a martyr to misanthropy, and querulousness, and ennui. At such times, it cannot be doubted that there was an approach to disease of mind. The impressions made by certain circumstances were disproportionate ; due consideration was not, or could not be, given to them ; they

could not be attended to and compared; and therefore the strong impression was allowed to induce all those uncomfortable and discontented feelings which the exercise of the judgment would have kept away, and which in happier moods of mind it was able to disperse. So long as such fits continued, there was a tendency to madness: if they had not been interrupted, the mind would not long have remained sane.

In such examples, the mind is unable to maintain its vigour in the absence of particular stimuli. Restore the stimulus, and the power will be found to remain; at least until years of indolence have brought the mind into a state of imbecility, and nearer to actual disease. In each stage of its declension, it approaches to such imbecility, and may become unable to bear any unexpected shock; the fortitude of the character being thus lost with the mental activity. But it will be only when circumstances make such a strong impression, or the mind has become too enfeebled to be directed in attention, or exercised in the comparison of things, that the man will begin to be insane. In many such instances, no result ensues from these inequalities of mind, except the temporary unhappiness of the individual; an unhappiness however which, whilst it lasts, makes his lot less desirable than that of him who gains his daily bread by daily labour. But a succession of mental disturbances, or some



supervening corporeal disease, now and then completes the mental disorder, and hurries the mind to absolute insanity. Some morbid sensation, some imagined wrong, bids defiance to the test of true comparison: the judgment is abused, the actions become first eccentric, then more decidedly irrational, and without prompt and skilful aid the governance of reason is eventually lost.

The man in the Spectator, who hanged himself to avoid the intolerable annoyance of having to tie his garters every day of his life, is but a satire on the misery of many, who, having no useful occupation, find the flight of time marked only by the swift repetition of petty troubles. The restlessness of Rousseau went on to so much discontent and suspicion, as to be closely allied to madness; and the painful struggles of Lord Byron, when "came his fit again," are detailed in words which show too plainly how they disturbed and threatened the integrity of his judgment. In such natures, any strong emotion, or the occurrence of disease, may destroy the delicate balance, and make a ruin of a mind which even in ruins continues to excite a mournful admiration. The diversion of social intercourse, which to other men is necessary to prevent mental torpor, becomes to them a source of irritation, by impeding the workings of the imagination: they find, that when alone, all the nobler aspirations of the soul are free, and images

of beauty, and virtue, and wisdom, occupy the mind. Society transforms them into a being they despise, deprives them of all their high and valued thoughts; and it afflicts them to feel what slight circumstances, acting on the man without, may affect the man within. But the pleasures of solitude are transient; their train is closed by baseless fancies, by fears undefined, by griefs unexpressed, and black despondency, from which society can alone relieve. We learn, from observing such effects arising from such causes, the advantage of mixed and varied occupations; suited to a being not made solely for contemplation or for action; and we may gather rules from these observations, the application of which to minds in a morbid state is very direct.

But if all outward circumstances could be kept from change, the mind possesses a singular power of re-acting upon itself, of which the proper effect is very serviceable to us; and the loss of which is often a disadvantage. Habit, the influence of which in weakening the impressions made on the senses, or preventing attention to them, has been already noticed, may deaden this effect, even of its own emotions upon the mind. Thus objects or circumstances which at first excited disgust or fear, often cease to do so when they are frequently presented to us: the prospect of ruin, when it has long been habitual, does not affright; the most imminent danger, when often incurred, does not



discompose ; the grossest language, when too often heard, or the grossest conduct, when too often witnessed, ceases to shock and offend ; and that which was at first condemned comes in time to be imitated. But when, without its being accounted for by the influence of habit, the mind ceases to respond to its usual emotions ; when joy no longer agitates, and calamity no longer moves it ; or when no sense of shame remains ; there is something morbid in the mind, which will probably prove to be the precursor of insanity. The sense has now become depraved, and the comparing power is impaired or lost, and the conduct is irrational. In the one case, the attention is not duly exercised upon the circumstances, because habit has caused them to make an inefficient impression : in the other case, the attention is not exercised upon them because the due impression of them cannot be made on a mind which is not in perfect health. In both cases, comparison is not properly exercised, and all the consequences of irrationality follow. The irrationality is as certain in the first case as in the last ; but in the first case the power of exciting the attention is only deadened, not lost : in the second case, the power of attending is lost, in consequence of a diseased state of the nervous system, which ought to receive impressions that now it does not receive. In the first case, the results are foolish actions ; in the second, the actions are decidedly insane.

There is also an *excitement* of the mind which arises from its own action; but when it is produced, the attention and comparison and memory cannot always be exercised without borrowing so much aid from the imagination, as to show the latter faculty its importance, and to produce the danger of its encroachment; and thus men, who are anxious to excel in serious labours, are not unfrequently led away from them to imaginative creations. The most lively of the faculties will not always condescend to play its proper part of an auxiliary, to guide and animate the mental labour, and decorate the solid fabric raised by the judgment; but allures away the attention, from occupations which fatigue it, to more pleasurable exercises; from which although it sometimes may return refreshed, it cannot always be reclaimed. I am inclined to believe that many of the shorter kind of poetical performances, and several of the most unbidden but acknowledged felicities of harmonious composition, have intruded themselves upon their authors' minds in the midst of their more serious occupations; bounding in among their graver thoughts like the dancers in a serious pantomime, and after usurping the stage for a time, allowing the graver plot again to proceed. When the mental faculties are excited to any kind of exercise, a disposition may be raised in them to other kinds of exercise; and their exertions and powers may prove to be



greater than the individual possessing them knew himself to be endowed with. It is exercise which discloses the uncounted and unknown treasures of the memory, and produces, from the imagination, combinations of such force and variety, as to justify our calling them creations. The influence of the mind's exercise upon the mind itself is commonly, then, of a beneficial kind. A belief, however, is entertained by some, and industriously propagated by others who can hardly be supposed to entertain it, that the mind is generally injured by its own exercise; and that education, as applied to the middle and lower ranks, is therefore hurtful to the understanding, and even productive of madness. Why these effects should be limited to rank, and not be the universal consequences of education, they do not explain. It would be no more unreasonable to assert, that the exercise of the body is necessarily productive of disease and deformity. Education is the training and exercise of the mind: and as when we recommend bodily exercise we do not mean the unnatural postures of the ballet, or the violent exertions of the gymnasium, neither by education do we mean an intemperate straining of the mental faculties. To educate a man, in the full and proper sense of the word, is to supply him with the power of controlling his feelings, and his thoughts, and his actions; between doing which and becoming insane, or unable to control his

feelings, his thoughts, and his actions, there is no very visible connexion. The best way of deciding the matter is by an appeal to facts. Whoever will converse with lunatics, with a view to its elucidation, will soon be satisfied, that a very small proportion of them consists of those whose talents have been regularly and judiciously cultivated. If I may trust to my own observation, I should say, that a well-educated man or woman is generally an exception to the rest; and that the majority is made up of weak and ignorant persons: even those who seem to have acquired some little knowledge, being commonly those who have picked it up as they could, with many disadvantages, and without the method which what alone deserves the name of a good education would have imparted to their application. The registers of the Bicêtre, for a series of years, show that even when madness affects those who belong to the educated classes, it is chiefly seen in those whose education has been imperfect or irregular, and very rarely indeed in those whose minds have been fully, equally, and systematically exercised. Priests, artists, painters, sculptors, poets, and musicians, whose professions so often appear marked in that register, are often persons of very limited or exclusive education; their faculties have been unequally exercised; they have commonly given themselves up too much to imagination, and have neglected comparison, and have



not habitually exercised the judgment. Even of this class, it is to be remembered, that it is commonly those of the lowest order of the class in point of talent who become thus affected: whilst of naturalists, physicians, chemists, geometricians, it is said not one instance occurs in these registers. Every one's recollection will convince him that of those attaining to eminence, in any of the departments even of a more imaginative character, nothing is so rare as for any one to exhibit symptoms of insanity.

It was stated in a former part of this inquiry, that the result of a sensation which was recalled was, like that of a sensation arising from a present object, an emotion, commonly either pleasurable or painful; and that imagination had the power of rendering emotions of this kind, as well as direct emotions from immediate objects of sensation, more intense. Either an emotion arising from a present impression, or from one past and recalled, may set the mind in action. A sad recollection, or a train of melancholy thought, benumbs it; and its activity sinks under the heavy pressure of despondency: a suggestion wholly accidental, a note of music, a picture, the sound of a voice, half a page of an admired book, a line of poetry, or a word spoken with no particular meaning, strikes the sense, acts on the memory, rouses the imagination, and every sorrowful phantom gives place

to agreeable images. Many memorials of these sudden effects have been left by men who delighted in literary composition ; and it seems ordained that the mind which has been much exercised, and which is merely depressed, without serious injury, *cannot* long remain insensible to the various impressions which every common walk or conversation presents to it ; but that something shall be continually happening which has a tendency to restore its activity. For, the means of effecting this are very various ; not only such as excite feelings immediately pleasurable ; but those which rouse us to a sense of dangers to be shunned, or which inspire us with anger and disgust : the productions of the mind will differ according to the different stimulus under which it acts ; but the torpor which hung upon it is equally banished by all strong impressions. The sighing of the wind, the murmuring of a stream, the falling of a leaf upon our path, the opening of a flower in spring, or a gleam of light in a cloudy day ; nay the mere fortuitous concurrence of two or three harmonious words, which are but the reflection of some feeling that cannot be fully revealed in words, may often lead to the most felicitous exertions of the intellect : an instantaneous power of exertion seems to be communicated to the mind, and this has been in many instances exercised immoderately, and even at the price of life. The power is often as transient



as it is suddenly developed; a brief exertion is made, and the mind relapses into inactivity; and the attempt to explain the extinction or the inspiration seems vain to the man who experiences them. The lives of men of imagination furnish many examples of this. The life of Alfieri, contains many instances of his being suddenly impelled to composition, either by a page in any author he happened to be reading, or by a fit of grief, or of love, or of indignation. His first sonnet seems to have been written in connexion with his first experience of the disturbance of the softer of these passions; and of the composition of the *Merope*, he says—"It was about February in 1782, that I was one day turning over the leaves of Maffei's *Merope*, reading passages here and there, to see if I could gain any thing from the style; when I felt a sudden fit of anger and indignation on thinking that the theatrical misery or blindness of our poor Italy was so great, as to cause us to think, or cause it to seem at least, that this was our best, or our only true tragedy; not the best of those only which were previously written, (which I should have denied,) but of all to come, or that could ever be written in Italy. In an instant, I seemed to see another tragedy, of the same name and subject, much more simple, and more warm and spirited than it. And such appeared to me to be my tragedy, of which the

conception was thus, as it were, forced upon me, during the time I was writing it. Whether it be really so or not, let posterity decide. If ever a writer of verses could say, *Est Deus in nobis*, I might say so, whilst imagining, sketching, and versifying my *Merope*, which allowed me neither peace nor truce until I had completed these three tasks one after the other;\* quite in a contrary method to that usual with me, since I have in all my other works performed these several parts of the tasks with long intervals between them."

No passion has, I believe, led to the production of so much poetry as that of love; it was love that in the sixteenth year of his short, and restless, and unhappy life, first made Burns a writer of poetry; and at an age still earlier, Dante composed his first verses in praise of his equally youthful mistress, Beatrice. This passion has been pronounced to be the whole of a woman's life, and a mere episode in that of man: but in the biography of most of the poets who have flourished in various parts of the world, it is sufficiently evident that it has formed one of the

\* Alfieri used first to devise the plot, and arrange the scenes and characters; then to write the whole hastily in prose; and lastly to put the prose into verse; a method which perhaps explains both his correctness and his coldness.—*Vita, scritta da esso: Cap. IV. and IX.*)



most important passages of their existence, and has been in many the very cause of those exertions by which they attained their celebrity. Against these, however, might be placed a very formidable number of persons who have written passionate verses of which the fame was as short-lived as the passion itself, and the merit as little as that of the object of the transient adoration.

It is happy for an imaginative writer when his inspiration has a source less likely to be exhausted; in feelings more permanent, and which exercise a steadier and even a purer influence over the creative mind. From such a source, I imagine, proceeded the fervour which sustained some of our greatest writers throughout long and arduous undertakings; a fervour less agitating than that which borrows its warmth from temporary passion, but quite as intense. The author of *Waverley*, in one of his admirable prefaces, says—"but to confess to you the truth, the works and passages in which I have succeeded, have uniformly been written with the greatest rapidity, and when I have seen some of these placed in opposition with others, and commended as more highly finished, I could appeal to pen and standish, that the parts in which I have come feebly off, were by much the more laboured." And again, speaking of his being unable to follow any methodical plan when he lights on such a character as Baillie Jarvie or

Dalgetty—"in short, Sir, on such occasions, I think I am bewitched:"—and, once more, speaking of the profits of his enchanted pen—"for myself, I am not displeased to find the game a winning one, yet while I pleased the public I should probably continue it merely for the pleasure of playing; for I have felt as strongly as most folks that love of composition, which is perhaps the strongest of all instincts, driving the author to the pen, the painter to the pallet, often without either the chance of fame or the prospect of reward." It is the more agreeable to quote such an example as this, because he who thus acknowledges the mysterious impulse which drives to composition, is one of those gifted persons whose extraordinary intellectual power is not alloyed with any of the real or affected misanthropy, and starts of eccentricity, which some have considered inseparable from men of genius. If it be true that much intercourse with the world is commonly fatal to great mental performance, how much more must we admire those who can enjoy and exhibit all the kind and endearing courtesies of life, without debasing or sullyng their immortal thoughts.

Some of the particulars, on which the exertion of mental power has occasionally seemed much to depend, would be too trivial to be mentioned, if they did not illustrate the peculiarity which now occupies us. It was the custom of Sterne, for in-



stance, to be very fastidious about his dress when he wished to go on with any of those literary performances which, though apparently so easy, were the result of labour and care; when he was ill-dressed he found that his *thoughts* were slovenly and ill-arranged. Haydn, also, used to dress himself with particular care before he sat down to composition: unless his hair was properly powdered, and he had his best coat on, he could not compose; he even used to say, that if he began to write without his diamond ring on his finger, the gift of Frederic the Second, he could not get on; and he could not write good music on any paper but the finest. Slovenliness of dress is, in fact, in most persons productive of feelings of personal discomfort, and such feelings are unfavourable to mental composure.—The associations, too, between dress and character are so powerful, that not many minds could long resist the imposition of a costume quite inconsistent with their station. The young soldier is inspired with a greater degree of military ardour when he puts on his first regimentals; and perhaps few persons would be able to maintain a grave and decorous conduct if condemned for any length of time to figure among their associates in the dress of a harlequin. The strange attire of a lunatic, too, I doubt not, re-acts upon and increases the absurdity of his thoughts.

Many pages might be filled with amusing illus-

trations of the helps required by authors of different temperaments ; to which musical composers would be found to have contributed very largely. It is related of Gluck, that he composed in a meadow, having his piano transported thither, and a bottle of champagne at his elbow. Sarti preferred the mysterious gloom of a vast apartment, feebly lighted with a single lamp ; and Cimarosi composed many parts of his lively opera of the *Matrimonio Segreto*, as well as some other of his works, in the midst of noisy parties.\* Paesiello composed, as Brindley the engineer meditated about canals, in bed ; and Sacchini was not inspired unless his favorite cats were sitting on his shoulders. Handel told Lady Luxborough that certain of his fine compositions had been suggested by hearing the cries of London.† Those who are unacquainted with the capriciousness of imaginative exercise, may be at a loss to account for such an effect from such a cause ; or to divine how, as in some instances which have been known to me, the sound of a street organ, and that not the best of its kind, shall have led to the production of a ballad or sonnet, between the measure of which, and the tune played on the organ, no connexion could afterwards be perceived. We can but mark the effects

\* Ed. Rev. May, 1820. History of Music.

† Lady Luxborough's Letters, published by Dodsley.



of these capricious excitements of the organs of thought; for such I suppose them to be; and are quite unable to explain them.

Mozart is said to have described his method of composing very minutely:—the coming on of the paroxysm; the impatience of disturbance; the involuntary pursuit of long trains of musical thought; until a whole composition was completed in his mind, though yet unwritten. He used afterwards to write it all very leisurely, and during this latter occupation, he was not hindered or annoyed by common interruptions. Beethoven, we are told, carries a paper book in his pocket, in order that the musical thoughts, which come unbidden and without warning, may not be lost; and he sometimes takes it out in company, and scrawls with great rapidity, and without lines, the symbols of infinitely varied harmony.\*

A remarkable influence is exerted over most minds by natural scenery, and the objects connected with its varieties. The diversity presented by a large town takes away the thoughts, not only from melancholy objects, but from subjects which in other circumstances would entirely occupy it. The lonely wanderer in the passes below Benledi, feels how intolerably oppressive even the mere sense of solitude may become, and how many images of

\* Travels in Germany, in 1821-22-23. Edin. Constable.

desolation and abandonment arise, in such situations, in the mind. Most persons remember the awe excited by the first view of the sea: and few can revisit it after long absence, without some degree of the same feeling. Travellers who have hung over the mighty falls of the Niagara, have vainly endeavoured to convey to the world the dreary wildness of the thoughts which occupied them, with such a spectacle before them, and the roar of waters around them. In all these cases, except the first, a man feels as if, with senses unfitted for the change, he were introduced to a world more immediate to the power in which he lives and moves; and he is oppressed and subdued. But the ordinary objects of towns, or the common scenery of an inhabited country, excite no such feelings, but only those which are either simply agreeable, or useful, by the refreshment they afford to the senses, or by the pleasant images they bring to the thoughts, or by the indications they afford of a benevolent superintendence.

I suppose it to be partly by means of certain influences exercised by natural objects on the senses, that particular seasons of the year, or states of the air, are found to affect the mind so greatly. But there is something more, and something unexplained. It is experienced that the mind is favourably disposed to action, or is greatly depressed, by variations of the atmosphere which cannot be referred to temperature, or to degrees



of brightness, or to any of its common qualities : it may be by the variable electrical condition of the air, or some other condition affecting the mind through the corporeal instruments. Certain it is, that such influences exist. A low temperature diminishes the sentient power of the extremity of the nerves ; all know how soon the sense of touch is impaired by such a cause : and if the cause is continued, the other senses, and the mind itself, become benumbed. Dullness of sense, imperfect motion, indifference, cowardice, and complete torpor of the mind, have been observed to arise from long exposure to cold. The low temperature of a severe English winter, which is observed to be fatal to so many old people, produces in certain constitutions a temporary death of intellect ; a condition of great misery, and only removed by an increase in the warmth of the atmosphere. It is probable that the nervous tissue is at such times actually rendered unfit for its proper office by a physical cause. On the other hand, a warmer temperature is generally favourable to mental exertion. In the hottest summers of our own climate, I have noticed unequivocal instances of increased acuteness of the senses, as of smell, taste, and touch ; and it is not improbable that some of the peculiar customs of those who have long resided in hot climates, and which are commonly looked upon as the mere refinements of selfishness, have this kind of origin. Alfieri mentions

that his favourite season for composition was the summer. Canova is said to have felt himself unequal to the performance of a master-piece of sculpture, when he was not cheered and warmed by the sun of Italy. The celebrated Le Sage is related to have been, in his latter years, torpid in the morning, brilliant at noon, and languid at night, visibly acquiring vigour each day with the advancing sun, and losing it as that luminary declined. In the letters of Shenstone, we find frequent expressions of his horror of winter, during which his mind and his body seem to have been equally depressed. The poet Thomson, although he described every season with such inimitable beauty, chiefly enjoyed the autumn, during which he most commonly composed. There is certainly something peculiarly delightful to sensation in the autumnal atmosphere; and the scenery of that season of the year is well fitted to temper the exhilaration of the heart without destroying it; to sober and to purify the thoughts; wherefore it has not unaptly been pointed out by the divine as that "eventide" of the year, which invites to solemn and serious reflection and finely touches the heart of man "to fine issues;" showing the advances of time, and reminding men that they are "the green leaves of the tree of the desert, which perish, and are renewed."\*

\* Alison.



animal delight; and every object, and the very air of that beautiful season, revives and refreshes the physical energies of every constitution: but as life proceeds, the images of hope which belong to it become associated with so many painful remembrances, as often but to mock the unhappy with promises already too often broken. The autumn charms alike all ages, the old as well as the young; the pensive, no less than the gay. Its coolness and its brightness, or its soft and almost mournful winds, and gathering clouds, are contrasted not disagreeably with the heat and the glare of the season that is past; whilst its falling leaves, its various colouring, and all the perishing beauties of the time, in some degree affect the simplest and the rudest minds. If the young are led to reflection by such influences, the reflection is not melancholy or unpleasing; whilst the old at least derive, from the emblems of mortality scattered around them, a profound conviction of the true wisdom of resignation. Doubtless, it has been in this season, that many an unpractised mind has first become conscious of those thoughts and feelings, which can only be expressed in language which is essentially poetical. It was in this season, that Burns, whose temperament was in all things that of a poet, used to experience the wild delight of walking, during a stormy day, on the sheltered side of a wood; the sighing and

murmuring of the trees, and the tumultuous sounds of the air among their agitated tops, seeming to whisper to him what other ears could not hear, or other imaginations conceive. I find a memorandum, made some years ago, concerning a patient very unconscious of the mysterious whisperings of the storm, but who suffered during the same season so great a depression of spirits, as to be almost always in tears : and in the year 1806, it was mentioned in the foreign journals, that during the prevalence of warm and humid weather, the number of suicides was so great at Rouen, as to cause the Faculty to look upon such self-destruction as the *epidemic* of the season. A similar opinion was entertained concerning the almost incredible number of suicides which took place at Versailles, in 1793 ; but in that unhappy period, there were at Versailles but too many other causes of desperation. Systematic writers on insanity have asserted, that active delirium is most common in spring and summer ; melancholia in autumn ; and fatuity in winter : such general assertions, however, must be received with considerable caution.

Of the immortal author of *Paradise Lost*, it is said, that his time of felicitous composition was limited to the period between the autumnal equinox and the vernal ; and although this notion is derided by Johnson, in his life of Milton, as the “ fumes of a



vain imagination," the learned biographer might perhaps, if in better humour than when he did Milton the injustice to compose that life, have been of a different opinion. The testimony of Milton's nephews is, that he himself remarked his fancy to be in the greatest vigour "from September to the vernal equinox;" and, certainly, Milton was not a man to be deluded by "the fumes of a vain imagination." It seems, moreover, that the composition of his great poem was suspended every year during the summer. Some natures are not very susceptible of these influences, and Johnson's appears to have been of that kind; although he has himself somewhere expressed an opinion, that the time of the year between Easter and Whitsuntide was most favourable to literary labours; an opinion, perhaps, originating in his own experience of greater mental composure, after the religious reflection to which he devoted himself at the season of Easter. In a passage which occurs in the Rambler, also, he has touchingly described the pitiable condition of "a man of an active and elevated mind, labouring under the weight of a distempered body." "The time of such a man," he observes, "fumes away in projects and in hope, and the day of action never arrives. He lies down delighted with the thoughts of to-morrow, pleases his ambition with the fame he shall acquire, or his benevolence with the good he shall confer:

but, in the night, the skies are overcast, the temperature of the air is changed; he awakes in languour, impatience, and distraction; and has no longer any wish but for ease, nor any attention but to misery." That much command may be obtained over these feelings, that, like the fancies and torments of the hypochondriac, they fly before the vigorous efforts of the will, is very true; but to say that they do so, is to acknowledge that they exist.

Authors might be mentioned who have recorded the laborious delights of the long nights of winter; and there have not been wanting those who have maintained that the great heat of warm climates, as that of India, disposes to mental as well as bodily indolence; but during late years many eminent examples have rendered that opinion more than doubtful: and warmer countries than our own have, in different ages of the world, produced great men in every kind of intellectual exertion; the powers of the mind, like the natural heat of the body, being evidently preserved in great varieties of climate and atmosphere, and only yielding to the utmost extremes.

There are some authors who, before writing a word, seem to have the whole of their subject digested and prepared, and write on with all the correctness of a copy, from morning to evening, and from evening to night. Others write with agitation, and, seemingly incapable of thinking



continuously, still produce trains of thought in fragments, which will subsequently unite. The papers of the Rambler, a work indicative of much reflection, and measured and somewhat pompous in its language, were often hastily written, and sent without revisal to the press. The writings of Rousseau, which abound with passionate and moving eloquence, were composed, as their author tells us, by slow and painful efforts; sentence by sentence being elaborated in the mind, and put down on paper as if the writing had been a school-boy's task. Even Locke says, of his own great work, that it was begun by chance, continued by intreaty, written by incoherent parcels, and after long intervals of neglect, resumed again as his humour or occasion permitted.\* On the other hand, some can pursue a subject through all the interruptions of business, and finish a performance in the mind amidst the distractions of public life, even in troubled and unquiet times. The very tumult and hurry which are about them seem to stimulate them more; and whilst the indolent man waits in vain for some future moment of leisure, when all that he intends to perform may be performed, the more diligent man does not long fail to discover, that perfect leisure and tranquillity are not to be expected by him who is once involved in

\* Epistle to the reader.

the world's business ; or, at least, that the expected time of quiet enjoyment will be delayed until his zeal has become extinct, and his activity has left him ; and he finds that he must be content, therefore, to work as others work, and pursue an object worthy of being kept in sight, undiverted by the agitations and accidents amidst which, it is probable, that some of the best and finest of human performances have been both designed and completed.

The impulse of necessity has driven many writers to composition ; not the mere conviction that exertion was essential to prosperity, but some pressing and actual necessity. The records of literary biography tell us of authors writing some of their best works to meet the payment of a lodging ; and of both writers and painters occasionally putting forth all the power of their genius, in order to defray the immediate expenses of a tavern dinner. The profession of authorship, when pursued without the justification of superior knowledge of the subject of composition, becomes, however, a trade of which the effects are as detrimental to the mind of the writers, as they are wearisome to the public ; and those who are always at the command of the publisher, and ready to undertake any kind of literary work for which payment is proposed, are for the most part persons incapable of any thing better.



The more agreeable stimulus of success will rouse many minds to the best exertions of which they are capable : finding that the opinion of the public is favourable to them, men strive to deserve it, and often succeed. Authors of the highest merit have shown, by their sensitiveness to criticism, that they are so deeply impressed with the imperfection of their own productions, as to let their opinion of them greatly depend on that of the public. It is not easy for a man to think himself in the right, if he lives in a community, all the members of which agree to consider him in the wrong. Criminals often feel no deep sense of their guilt, until they are condemned for it ; and men who find themselves admired for what is called their benevolence, or for any other supposed good qualities, generally begin to aim at the possession of such qualities, and come to deserve the reward which was perhaps bestowed before they deserved it. Remove a person who has been buoyed along in this agreeable manner, to a new neighbourhood, where not only he has no reputation, but is perhaps looked upon with coldness or suspicion, and he is like a man whose talents and goodness have been annihilated ; he exerts himself no more. The effect of prosperity is on other persons quite as unsalutary ; they only flourish in the storm ; in the calm of difficulties overcome they sicken and languish ; all their energies are

exerted when they have nothing but vexation about them, and ruin before them; make them easy on these points, and the source of their happiness, as well as of their activity, seems to be completely dried up. These persons have sometimes justified the humorous paradox of never being happy but when they were miserable. It is the effect of applause, in like manner, to incite some to better exertions than those which have elicited it, and in others to induce a cessation of the exertions by which applause has been deserved; just as we see, in public meetings of men, that some of the speakers rise into eloquence as soon as they perceive that the feelings of the assembly are responsive to their own; while others, who begin to speak in a rational manner, become giddy with the first cheer, and directly deviate from argument into noisy and empty declamation.

Nothing is more calculated to excite our admiration, than the spectacle of a man whom misfortune, tyranny, or pain, cannot obscure; but who in every new trial, and throughout all trials, can yet vindicate the character impressed upon him by the hand of nature. It excites a painful interest to know that the greater part of Burns's songs, the most beautiful and touching of his compositions, were written during his residence at Dumfries, when the patronage of noble friends, and the companions of convivial hours, had finally procured for him the



annual stipend of seventy pounds, attached to the office of a supervisor. In debt, in difficulty, amidst irregularities, and ruined health, and self-reproach, and despair, still the spirit which animated him broke forth from time to time in passages of eloquent poetry, until death closed upon his errors and his woes, and set his spirit free for ever.

The best exertions of the mind are attended with so much pleasure, and are in every respect so advantageous, that it is not surprising to find that many have carefully attended to the means of increasing their frequency. It is fortunate when no other means are had recourse to than study, or voluntary attempts to collect and concentrate the thoughts, attempts often alone sufficient to produce the power of going on with or undertaking any task. To some, the aspect of the beauties of nature, and to others, a lonely and retired apartment are sufficient. Lord Bacon is said to have delighted to exercise his mind with beautiful flowers before him, and some sweet music played in an adjoining room. When Brindley, the famous engineer, wished to think over any project, he went to bed for a day or two. But the love of praise has led many to less harmless, and to less innocent modes of exciting the mind. More than one eminent public man has been supposed to owe his greatest efforts to the temporary stimulus of wine; and others have been known to speak best under the influence of brandy.

There are nervous systems so excitable, that a cup of strong tea or coffee delivers the mind from all the troubles and anxieties of life ; elevating the intellectual powers without disturbing them, and, with less pernicious consequences than opium, permitting their most happy and successful exertion. I have witnessed the singular effects of strong tea in persons oppressed by excessive fatigue and anxiety, and have known it rapidly restore those who appeared to be in even a most dangerous state of exhaustion. Ammonia is the favourite stimulant of some ; and opium of others, a drug which, whilst it deadens sensation, amplifies the imaginative power, and affected by which, it has been said that certain of the most admired specimens of English forensic eloquence have been produced. It is related of the celebrated Mr. Dunning, that whenever he wished to shine in a speech or in society, he used to put on a blister. Curran used to prepare for exertion in a great cause, by playing wild and extemporaneous airs on the violoncello. Aubrey relates of Ben Jonson, that "he would many times exceede in drinke. Canarie was his beloved liquor : then he would tumble home to bed : and when he had thoroughly perspired, then to studie." And after these indulgences, the eccentric poet had his visions and his inspirations ; the mind being apparently in an active and very happy state ; the agitation of debauch being gone, and an agreeable excitement alone



remaining. There are many persons who, although their visions are less lively than Ben Jonson's, are yet brought into that torpid state from which temporary dissipation acts as a means of temporary relief; and if they fly to it, as too often they do, they generally live to show that even the powers of the mind may be a fatal gift. Such have been the men, who, as mature age advanced, missing the excitements of early years and youthful hopes and competitions, have grown indolent and misanthropical; now and then making a new attempt at exertion, but wanting strength to persevere in it. Feeling that they neglected the true cultivation and exercise of the faculties which God had given to them; and seeing clearly that life was passing away, and nothing great or good performed, they have gradually relinquished their care, and have lost the keenness of self reproach in alternate apathy and excess. Roused, from time to time, by artificial and destructive kinds of stimulus, they are conscious of a feverish mental movement, a renewed warmth of imagination, and the revival of shadows of long buried thoughts: but in a day or two, this morbid state subsides, and leaves such unhappy men a prey to inaction, to languor, and to vain regret. They become at length conscious of an impairment of mental strength: they find that they are less able to study; and that the finer conceptions of the mind less frequently mingle with

harassing and painful trains of thought. It is happy for such men when any daily duty, though ever so trifling, demands a daily exertion ; without which they sink, by a succession of mental distresses, into sottishness, or lethargy, or mental disease ; often into total despair. Even a competence, such as philosophers have allowed to be a blessing, is no blessing to them. It is better to labour with the hands, and to suffer a thousand anxieties, than to endure woes like theirs. For any one who feels this mental disorder creeping upon him, it might almost be said that there is no cure but calamity : certainly, there is no safety except in the creation of some daily work, the necessity of performing which will alone defend him against that which makes a life of ease and indolence less enviable than the hardship of the humblest labourer of the fields :

“ Withouten that, would come an heavier bale,  
Loose life, unruly passions, and diseases pale.”

In some way or other, then, to which the mind becomes accustomed, the power of exercising it is excited ; and the madman does not differ more from the man who is sane, than the man artificially or accidentally roused to the highest pitch of his mind does from himself in his state of depression. There would appear to be in almost every mind some sympathetic key, which, if we can but touch it, will awaken the responsive tone of the whole : and as



those who strive to prove the existence of insanity know well how to do this for their own purposes, it would be well if medical men would learn to do so for the preservation or restoration of mind, and for the protection of those wrongly accused of mental unsoundness.

But it may be asked, why so many examples are here accumulated, all proving the susceptibility of the mind to particular kinds of stimuli, or showing the modes in which this susceptibility is evinced. It must be remembered, that I have stated it to be my opinion, that correct views of insanity are only to be attained by a wider range of observation of the peculiarities of mind than has been commonly thought necessary. No circumstance which has been mentioned, or which remains to be mentioned, is without some connexion with the duty of those who profess to understand when the mind is diseased and requires assistance. The effects of the various stimuli, which have already been enumerated, illustrate and explain those other effects, more distinctly morbid, which are produced in other minds, by impressions having a similar origin, but not alike productive of the same effects in all. One man is impelled by certain influences acting on his brain, or on particular parts of his brain, to poetical composition, another to bodily activity, a third to loquacity, a fourth to murder; one to mere romance, another to incoherency and

madness. The stimuli may be various, and the effects of every one of the stimuli may also be various in different persons. Mere locality, the associations connected with a place, may be sufficient to influence the manner in which the mental operations are carried on: some are mad and unmanageable at home, and sane abroad: we read in Aretæus of a carpenter who was very rational in his workshop, but who could not turn his steps towards the Forum without beginning to groan, to shrug his shoulders, and to bemoan himself. Dr. Rush relates an instance of a preacher in America, who was mad among his parishioners, except in the pulpit, where he conducted himself with great ability; and he also speaks of a judge who was very lunatic in mixed society, but sagacious on the bench. Whoever has felt the power of certain scenes to revive feelings of pleasure, of grief, or of anger, can be at no loss to understand how the impressions of place may induce peculiar operations of the mind, and even rational operations in persons who are in other times and places insane. The consideration of these influences explains, too, some of the innumerable and indescribable eccentricities of the human character, mental and moral; the inconsistency which makes a man a saint in one society or place, and a libertine in another society or place; which displays his talent in certain circumstances only, and shows him to be helpless and foolish in other



circumstances; and according as the susceptibility exists to more or fewer, or more or less varied impressions, or has been more or less controlled, leaves the character of so many at the mercy of mere chance, capable of every thing good, but often yielding without resistance to every thing which is bad. A natural disposition to imitation aids this kind of influence; and the importance of keeping this truth in view, either as regards the education of the young, or the management of the insane, cannot be too much impressed on those to whom such duties are entrusted. In neither case can it safely be forgotten, that example is more powerful than precept; and with respect to the insane, it plainly points out the duty of securing those, whose minds are already weakened, from the continual spectacle of follies even greater than their own.

It seems to me, moreover, to merit consideration, how often those minds which most require any of the various stimuli that have been mentioned, or which most strongly respond to them, really depart from the perfect equilibrium of sound mind on that side on which the stimulus most strongly acts: and, perhaps, whenever the common stimuli of life and its engagements are insufficient for the production of mental exertion, and a superaddition of accidental excitement is required, there is something wrong in the con-

struction of the mind, or a disposition in it to become disturbed, and irregular, and unsound. Here, as in all the other instances, it is the *degree* which constitutes what is morbid. We admire the effect of the superadded and accidental excitement of scenery or of passion, as it is exhibited on the susceptibilities of the poet, or the orator, or the painter, or the writer of romance, or the musician: but it is probable that many of these admired persons could tell us, on the evidence of their own agitated feelings, and some *have* indeed told us, that the excitements to which they have owed their fame, were often very nearly allied to morbid excitement, if not absolutely morbid. Long continued indulgence in the luxury of music has, in well attested cases, produced an excitement ending in mental disturbance, or in epilepsy. Mozart's sensibility to music was connected with so susceptible a nervous system, that in his childhood the sound of a trumpet would turn him pale, and almost induce a convulsion. Great exertions of talent, on public occasions, have been known to induce such a state of excitement as required some great subsequent intellectual labour for its mere relief; and the same excitement, if not directed towards that kind of labour, might have been directed to some part of the nervous system, and have become the cause of irregular or diseased actions. It is said that the



composition of his eloquent sermons so excited the mind of the celebrated Bourdaloue, that he would have been unable to deliver them, but for a means he discovered of allaying the excitement. His attendants were one day both scandalized and alarmed, on proceeding to his apartment for the purpose of accompanying him to the cathedral, by hearing the sound of a fiddle, on which was played a very lively tune. After their first consternation, they ventured to look through the key-hole; and were still more shocked to behold the great divine dancing about, without his gown and canonicals, to his own inspiring music. Of course they concluded him to be mad. But when they knocked, the music ceased, and after a short and anxious interval, he met them with a composed dress and manner; and, observing some signs of astonishment in the party, explained to them, that without his music and his exercise, he should have been unable to undertake the duties of the day. Many a lunatic is only a person whose susceptibility to certain stimuli is in like manner excessive, but produces effects less agreeable, or effects which are inconvenient or dangerous to himself and others. Here, then, if at all, we see some kind of connexion between the "great wits" and the mad; but still the interval which separates them is considerable. It would be folly and gross injustice to confound them, and it is most important

to distinguish them, and to examine in what the distinction exists. Take the strongest cases of mental excitement. The man whose mind is sane, however strongly excited, retains the use of his attention and comparison; the imagination may wander through all possible modes of feeling and thinking, and to the utmost limits of mental excursion; but, in its train, are still the other faculties of the mind, vigorous and unimpaired, to guide, with gentle and almost unfelt rein, but still to guide, the fiery course of the most active faculty of the intellect. When the hour of inspiration is passed, too, the man of sound mind exercises his attention and comparison, even severely, on the productions of such states of activity, and corrects and improves what he has produced. His emotions may have been vivid, his thoughts such as have never before found their way into the minds of his readers, his figures bold, or such as have not been employed before, his actions prompt, and his expressions full of strength and of originality:—but the emotions, and the thoughts, and the figures, and the actions and expressions, still preserve a certain verisimilitude or analogy with natural feelings, natural actions, natural phenomena, and natural modes of expression. To attract admiration to what he performs or does, or to deserve it, there must be something in his grandest or even in his wildest thoughts,



that may still be reflected in many minds in which such thoughts could never have spontaneously arisen; and to secure this end demands the continual exercise of the attention and comparison, or, in other words, the continual vigilance and guardianship of the judgment. If the poet cannot accomplish this, or if he wanders beyond the sphere within which alone the light of his imagination can reach the minds of others, he becomes at once absurd, and is looked upon as a "mad poet." If the orator commits the same kind of error, his command over his auditory is instantaneously lost. The poet or the orator has wholly given way to his excited imagination, and lost his power of attending to what is unconnected with its suggestions; he has ceased to make those continual but rapid acts of comparison, which could alone guide his swift flight with judgment; and he necessarily deviates into what is incongruous and unnatural. Such is the state of many who are insane. They are strongly excited by particular circumstances, recollections, persons, or places, and they altogether yield to the excitement: nor is that state of excitement succeeded by the power of examining or reconsidering the actions, or the other results of it: if the results are irrational, they cannot review or amend them. They have lost the power of comparing one thing with another; to return to the subject is to return to their

madness. The causes of their excitement, whatever they may be, produce therefore undue effects, and they cannot liberate themselves from the prejudices, or the passions, or the eccentricities, or the modes of expression, which arise from such impressions. They decide without judgment, and act, as respects the objects associated with the excitement, irrationally.

But strong emotions, and the passions, are the great stimuli of our minds, and too often stimuli which long excite, and finally exhaust. If the ordinary impressions acting upon us are the gentle gales, which bear us along the course of life with variable swiftness, the stronger feelings are the tempests, before which we are driven, and by which we run a constant risk of wreck. Until the age of passion, the child is secure from the more violent forms of intellectual disorder; and when the age of passion is past, men fall into imbecility rather than madness. In Spain, in Turkey, in Russia, in Modern Greece, in China, in all countries where men are restrained, as much as human tyranny can restrain them, from every moving and aspiring thought, the proportion of madmen is very small. But from the same causes it follows that the mind seldom developes its full powers in societies furnishing so little encouragement. It is quite unnecessary to give instances of the results



of emotions where less restraint exists : since no one can have failed either to feel or to see how they excite, with good or bad effect, to the utmost exertion of the intellectual faculties. Love, hatred, anger, or fear, or vanity, or a desire for fame, have in a thousand instances instigated to mental exertions new to the individual himself, and surprising to others. Poetry, eloquence, invention, persevering labour, have each, in different examples, sprung from these passions. How often these same passions, when unrestrained, have ruined the mind, the wards of every lunatic asylum teach us but too well. It has been said that anger is a short madness ; and it has been said, as truly, that no man can at once be in love and be wise : and, in like manner, we may observe each passion and emotion in excess disturbing the mind by a direct impairment of the comparing power, and, consequently, the judgment. Until the tyranny of the passion is past, the attention is forcibly withheld from all objects which would correct the false decision. The angry man cannot attend, in his moments of passion, to circumstances of mitigation, which in a calmer hour occur to him : when they do occur to him, he compares them with the causes of his anger, and corrects his judgment. Anger continued would be a continued loss of attention to such mitigating circumstances, or a continued privation of the memory of them, combined with a

want of just comparison : it would, therefore, be a state of continued madness, on the subject causing the anger ; and such is the condition of certain lunatics. Need it be added, that men violently in love can only see the charms of their mistress, cannot attend to those imperfections which are so plainly seen by others, cannot compare her qualities so as to decide reasonably concerning her character, or form a rational estimate of it. Surely this state continued is a state exactly according with the definition of insanity ; and the lunatic often exemplifies it, in a passionate attachment to persons quite regardless of his passion, or quite unworthy of it. But the passion of love, like that of anger, is commonly transient ; sometimes giving place to equally irrational dislike, in which there is an equal want of proper comparison ; and at other times more happily subsiding into that affection which is neither blind to the faults of those whom we love, nor attaches undue importance to them ;—an affection regulated by a due exercise of the attention and comparison.

Any other passion will furnish the same kind of illustration. Regard a man who is wholly under the influence of fear. His mind is taken up with the strong impression made by the object feared. He has no attention for other objects ; he cannot remember various means of defence or escape which he will think of when the danger has passed.



He cannot compare one circumstance with another. He flies with precipitation, or he waits to be destroyed, or he does what hastens his destruction : he is, for the time, deprived of reason. How different is the situation of the man who has a sense of danger, but without fear. Undismayed by what threatens him, not under the dominion of dread, he attends to, weighs, compares every circumstance connected with the danger, and with the means of escape ; and whilst he can do this, whatever dangers may surround him, his conduct is rational. It is only when the passion so impairs one or more faculties of the mind as to prevent the exercise of comparison, that the reason is overturned ; and then the man is mad. He is mad only whilst this state continues ; but whilst it continues, whether for a short or a long time, he is mad on the subject of his fear. He ceases to be mad when he can correct the erroneous judgment of his excited state ; and not before. We see many madmen whose malady consists in their peculiar excitability to anger, and in the impossibility of correcting the judgments of their angry state : seeming to have become tranquil, the renewal of the subject of their anger renews the passion ; and as they are never able to reason upon it, to compare and to judge, they continue to be mad on that subject. The commencement of the correction of their angry judgment is the com-

mencement of convalescence. Until they can do this, however reasonable they may be on all other subjects, on this they are mad. When they can do it, they are mad no longer.

It was observed in a former chapter, that a powerful emotion may affect the brain in that particular manner of which a false sensation is the consequence. A gentleman who was some years ago in great danger of being wrecked in a boat on the Eddystone rocks, gave an account of the state of his feelings when the danger was impending; and said that he thought he actually *saw* his family at that moment. Most of the appearances which have been looked upon as supernatural, have probably had this kind of origin. Some of these will be considered in the chapter on Insanity, for which they will be seen to furnish very striking examples; and they are well calculated to enforce the necessity of restraining feelings, the power of which may be so fearfully exerted.

Though far within the bounds of madness, the indulgence of violent emotions, frequent or long continued, is singularly detrimental to the understanding; and this effect deserves more consideration than it has gained. The mere imitation of violent emotions, though very temporary, has been fatal, as in the instance of actors who have died in consequence of their excited feelings. The continuance of the real emotion, or the frequent



recurrence of it, is more generally hurtful: and it is to be presumed, as Dr. Parry has conjectured, that the unmeasured emotions of insanity are sometimes perpetuated in consequence of the disorder of brain originally induced by their violence.\* A man is at first only irritable, but gives way to his irritability: whatever temporarily interferes with any bodily or mental function reproduces the disposition to be irritated, and circumstances are never wanting which act upon this disposition, until it becomes a disease; after long indulgence of which, the power of calm and continued attention, the clearness and freedom of the imagination, the exercise of the memory, are all found to be impaired, and the judgment to be in some degree affected. The state of the brain, or part of the brain, which is produced whenever the feeling of irritation is renewed, whatever that state may be, is more easily induced at each renewal, and concurs with the moral habit to bring on the paroxysm more readily on every slight occasion. Other vehement emotions and passions effect the same disorder of the mind. The most idle *sentimentalist* feels that, by giving way to them, he becomes indifferent to other impressions; that any mental employment becomes more unwelcome to him, and that his long excited imagination loses its power:

\* Elem. of Pathol. and Therap. Parag. DCCLXXIII.

but those whose duty it is to be engaged in active pursuits find, with more certainty, that the indulgence of a disturbing passion actually impairs the powers of the memory, and destroys much of the gathered fruit of former years. This is the chief part of the effect which is generally perceived, and is a very serious effect ; but along with it the whole mind has commonly suffered some detriment. The restlessness and disturbance of a state in which the attention is yielded up to the feelings, is such, that relief is sought in thoughts or studies which rouse and engage the feelings more ; and the salutary exercise which the common business of the world would afford is despised. Devoted to one object, or to one feeling, often a very undeserving object, and unworthy feeling, all the objects of a just ambition appear poor and worthless, and days and weeks are abandoned to agitations which seriously injure the understanding. So long as the attention can yet be directed to other objects and thoughts, a hope remains, that time, or change of place, which accelerates the effects of time, may produce a cure ; or the mind may make a sudden effort and cast off its chain. The heaviness and gloom which have long oppressed the intellectual faculties are, in general, slowly withdrawn ; and with many threatenings of their return. If, instead of thus withdrawing, they still rest upon the mind, or gather more thickly over it, the afflicted man loses the



power of transferring his attention from the cause of his sufferings to any other object ; a fatal torpor creeps over him ; and he feels, too late, that the exercise of reason, once the source of his happiness and prosperity, is in a great measure lost. “ The moralists,” said Johnson, reflecting on the melancholy fate of the poet Collins, “ all talk of the uncertainty of fortune, and the transitoriness of beauty : but it is yet more dreadful to consider, that the powers of the mind are equally liable to change ; that understanding may make its appearance and depart, that it may blaze and expire.”

Seeing that any feeling in excess,—the love of pleasure, or of ease, or of money, or of expense, or of applause ;—or that self-denial, or anger, or jealousy, or hope too sanguine, or sorrow too much indulged, may become independent of the restraint of the comparing powers, and thus impair or disorder the understanding ; we cannot but remark the importance of cherishing that governing and protecting action of the mind, which has been so often alluded to in this inquiry, by careful cultivation and exercise ; and acknowledge, that there are few or no faults or crimes which have not their origin in a defect of judgment, or in a disparity between the power of the understanding and the force of the emotions and sensations. We have traced some of the modes in which the latter prevail over the former, in a manner which must

naturally incline us to be at once merciful in punishing, and careful to prevent the errors which arise from that inequality. We must now proceed to the review of some natural accidents which oppose themselves to the requisite cultivation and exercise of the mind, and prevent the maintenance of the salutary control, even when it has once been established.



## CHAPTER VII.

MODIFICATIONS OF INTELLECTUAL ACTIVITY AND POWER  
BY DISEASE.

THE plan of this publication does not comprehend a full consideration of the Causes of mental impairment; but the importance to be attached to the indications of such impairment, in any particular case, depends so much on the nature of its origin, that it is highly necessary for all who are interested in decisions concerning the character, and probable course, of any case of mental derangement,—decisions materially affecting the management of such cases,—to be acquainted with the various corporeal disturbances which affect the tranquillity of the mind.

Every disorder, however slight, which is accompanied by fever, may produce a temporary effect on the mental powers. Even on the coming on of a common attack of sore throat, we perceive a rapidity of thought, and an excitement of the mind. All inflammations are accompanied with some degree of fever, and all may therefore disturb the mind. But disturbance of the circulation, without fever, may produce the same effect. Inequality in the distribution of the blood to the

brain, or irritation of the brain produced by an inequality in the circulation of other organs, invariably affects the intellectual functions ; and the affection may assume every variety, from the slightest to the most extreme excitement, or from the slightest to the most extreme depression, and through all the forms of impaired sensation, attention, memory, and imagination. The causes of such inequalities of circulation, and the causes of irritation of the brain, may be very various ; they may be congenital, or born with the individual ; they may be accidental and acquired, and temporary or permanent. The extent, or the permanent nature of the cause, will commonly determine the degree and duration of the mental affection. During pregnancy, partly perhaps from an undue circulation in the brain, and partly from a morbid state of the brain itself, explained by its sympathy with the states of the uterus, the mental faculties and moral feelings sometimes undergo singular modifications. Depraved sensations, great irritation, melancholy, the development of unusual propensities, as a propensity for stealing, or for saving or spending money, &c., are among the well known accompaniments of the pregnant state ; the variety depending, it would seem, on different portions of the brain being irritated in different cases.

Among the first symptoms of fever, before there



is any marked disturbance in the circulation, we observe, with many, signs of an oppressed nervous system, or what in medical language is termed a prostration of strength, a langour of mind, an indisposition to mental application, an indifference to society, and a wandering of thought. It would seem as if the energy of the brain and nervous system were directly impaired. To this state succeeds what is called re-action ; the pulse rises, and there is a general excitement, without a return of real strength. The body is restless, but cannot endure action ; the mind stimulated, but incapable of exertion : the senses become acute, the least sound offends the ear, the light of day is too powerful for the sight ; the memory partakes of the excitement, and circumstances, long apparently forgotten, recur to it. Languages, neglected for many years, will thus, sometimes, be revived in the mind, and suggested to the tongue. The excitement passes on to delirium ; and this again, when the fever subsides, yields to the general torpor and exhaustion which remains ; both the body and the mind slowly recovering their powers. The mental disturbance continues, perhaps, during the state of convalescence, in the form of a mild maniacal affection, but of a temporary nature, for which patients, have, I fear, been sometimes subjected to confinement with common lunatics. As any part of the nervous system may suffer in the

general disturbance of fever, there sometimes remains a defect either in the nerves, or in the brain, which leads to erroneous sensations; and all the fancies of the hypochondriac may be thus produced; a belief in the change of size or nature of any limb, or of the exuberant growth of the nose, or of the conversion of the body into a tea-pot, a billiard ball, or a bottle. In nervous persons, the fever itself is almost always accompanied with some of these phenomena; and sometimes the common events of the household are mingled up with the distressing sensations of the fever, so as to present the extravagance of a dream; as in a lady of my acquaintance, who, suffering from the burning heat of the malady, imagined herself to be a roasted turkey.

I have known an attack of scarlet fever throw all the previous events of a boy's life so much into the shade, that they could not be distinctly remembered for many years afterwards: they were not forgotten, but they were dimly recollected. One effect of the great plague at Athens, is related to have been the impairment of the memory of those who recovered; so that their friends were often not remembered by them, but were thought to be strangers.

It has sometimes happened, that the excitement of a fever has changed the character of the idiotic and stupid for the better: even the excitement of



mania has been said to be now and then serviceable in the same way ; or a fall from the top of a house ; or a blow on the head ; instances rather open to ridicule, especially the last, as few who were educated under the old scholastic system, do not retain an impression of the doubtful utility of such an application.

I am acquainted with a gentleman who found, during his recovery from the measles, a disorder accompanied with considerable fever, that his sight was very curiously affected: the nurse, sitting close by his bed, appeared to him to be diminished to the smallest imaginable size: he remarked, however, that he knew this to be a deception; and remembered at the same time that the nurse was of the size of other women. The sensation then, alone, was impaired: his memory and his comparison prevented him from becoming delirious, and from believing that the size of the nurse was in reality as small as it appeared to be.

In the fever which has been described by certain authors, under the name of *Calentura*, a singular delusion of the senses is said to take place. This affection has been observed in sailors during voyages in hot regions; the patient mistakes the sea for fields and pastures, representing, perhaps, the scenery of his distant home; and the patients have been known to walk overboard with this impression.

The sensations which we receive from external objects being no measure of the actual proportion or properties of such objects, but a mere revelation of such of their properties, and in such proportions as are required to be known by us for purposes of security and enjoyment, any modification of the communicating medium of sensation may cause an unusual impression to be conveyed to us. The light which cheers, or the music which delights us when we are well, is painful to the eye or to the ear when we are sick : or, without any change of the temperature of the atmosphere, a patient will complain, amongst other symptoms of nervous disorder, of an insufferable sense of heat. The very pulsation of the heart and arteries, almost unperceived in health, becomes a source of disquietude in some forms of disease ; preventing sleep, or alarming the patient with the idea that the vessels which carry the blood will actually give way. A mere catarrh will sometimes cause one ear to convey a different sound from that conveyed by the other ; the same note, but in a different key ; or the same words, but as if from two voices, one an octave higher than the other. In paralytic patients, all sensation may be lost in one hand, or arm, or one half of the body. A patient told me that for a time, after an attack of paralysis, every thing appeared to him to be green : another said that he seemed always to have, on one side of him,



a hill, and on the other a deep pit. By others I have known complaints made, that all the objects on one side seemed to be quite close to them, in consequence of which they walked with a continual direction towards the side opposite. In Chorea, a disorder of the nervous system, attended with irregular muscular movements, the sense of touch is also sometimes impaired, or at least the sensibility to pain; and the patients will prick themselves with pins, not only without inconvenience, but apparently with some kind of enjoyment. Lunatics have been known to become so insensible to pain, as to sit with their feet in the fire, until they were shockingly burnt: others have drank boiling water with an appearance of satisfaction. I have seen this modification of sense, in cases exhibiting merely a *tendency* to maniacal excitement; as in cases of amenorrhœa, with determination to the head, accompanied with continual coldness of the feet, and such a diminution of ordinary sensations, that when the feet were put in very hot water, the patient has complained that it did not feel warm. In other patients, those particularly who are suffering from painful affections of the nerves, or from some diseases of the brain and spinal marrow, the surface of the body becomes exceedingly sensitive to touch: a stream of cold air will produce suffering, or the touch of a cold hand occasion coughing. The irritation of a wound received in dissection, has so impaired the sense of touch, as to confound all

previous impressions of extent. When the constitution is under the fatal influence of the poison of a rabid animal, the sight of water, the bright surface of a mirror, a breath of air, the slightest sound, will excite horrible convulsions. A great increase of sensibility is produced by certain fumes, which exert a pernicious influence over the whole nervous system; thus the vapours of mercury, to which some workmen are exposed, have been observed to destroy the balance between sensation and external circumstances, to such a degree, that the body has become a kind of living barometer, which every variation in the moisture, or other conditions of the air, affected. The Baron Larrey had a patient who was recovering from amaurosis, to whom all objects appeared of unnatural magnitude; men became giants, and a cup of ptisan seemed as large as a cask. The paroxysms of epilepsy are often preceded by a spectrum; and the state of the brain then existing, whatever it be, being present in other instances without being followed by the paroxysm, has often been the origin of a belief in supernatural appearances. In other cases, all objects have appeared inverted just before the epileptic attack. I know a gentleman, who in a state approaching to fainting, sometimes induced by cupping, and sometimes by pain, sees the most lovely landscapes displayed before him.

Some of the examples just given, show that the sensations may be affected, and it may be added,



that the mind may be excited without febrile action; by a larger circulation of blood, for instance, through the brain, in the determination to the vessels of the head which so often precedes apoplexy or paralysis. Warning of this state is generally given to the patient, by noises in his ears; by vertigo, or by headach: but sometimes he is only conscious of what appear to him to be indications of health; the restoration, perhaps, of hearing, or increased acuteness of sight, together with a degree of excitement, which leads him to think himself in unusually good health. These are the "suspecta bona," in which the medical observer does not confide as harbingers of good.

Epileptic patients are, occasionally, warned of the approach of a paroxysm by mental excitement; their high spirits becoming, to their friends, the well known precursors of their sufferings. The disposition to this dreadful malady has sometimes appeared to me to be unquestionably increased by urging the faculties of very susceptible young persons to exertions, which, though not beyond their singular capacity, could yet not be made without a most hurtful excitement of the brain.\*

\* For some highly judicious observations on the intellectual management of children, I beg to refer to the preface of a little work recently published by Dr. Darwall of Birmingham, entitled, "Plain Directions for the Management of Infants."

Slight indications of cerebral irritation should not be considered unimportant. I know children, who, on being unusually excited by conversation or reading before going to bed, commonly awake from frightful dreams, and are, for a certain interval, affected with false sensations concerning the objects which are present in the room. In all such cases the cause of excitement should be carefully avoided. Hysterical women are commonly distinguished by variability of spirits and feelings; by irritability or feebleness of mind; often exhibiting proofs of a weakened intellect, and sometimes avowing their consciousness of it, as a consequence of the frequent paroxysms of disturbance to which they are subject, and which are generally followed by proportionate depression. I attended a female patient a few years ago, who was subject to paroxysms of violent tremor affecting the muscles which support the head, in consequence of which the head would be shaken from side to side, for ten minutes together, with incredible rapidity and violence: whenever these fits were coming on, an extreme and almost delirious loquacity was observed. A young woman suffering from amenorrhœa, with morbid determination of blood to the head, and much cerebral excitement, told me she felt an uncontrollable disposition to talk, and felt as if she "could not talk loud enough." A very corpulent, robust looking woman, subject to hysteria, with some



threatenings of paralysis of the left side, described herself as feeling so well and lively before her worst attacks that she "could not always refrain from singing." Immediately after a paralytic attack, attended with incomplete hemiplegia, I have known a patient commence talking, and continue to talk without ceasing until the pulse became weak and irregular from bleeding. The excitement of the brain, produced by some disturbance in its circulation, may be brought on even by exercise, as in a carriage, the continued motion of which creates a great disposition in some persons to talk and sing. The direct excitement of passion seems to be relieved by violent gesticulation and vociferation; and all these forms of excitement may be seen in violent lunatics; who will continue to walk or to talk very actively for an incredible length of time.

The disposition to locomotion and loquacity does not always attend such excitement as affects the rapidity of the thoughts. All who have known the inconvenience of a temporary state of fever, know, perhaps, the distressing activity of the mind, the eternal succession of mental images by which it is attended: and many maniacs suffer this torment without any febrile action. A man no higher in rank than the keeper of a small country inn, and who now and then consulted me when he found his melancholy fits approaching, used at such times to complain of insufferable restlessness, without

relief by day or night; and, striking his hand on his forehead, would express his misery by saying, with all the energy of morbid excitement, "I am overwhelmed with a *sea* of thoughts."

When the vascular irregularity, which was lately spoken of as productive of a deceptive excitement, has gone on to the production of apoplexy or paralysis, and the patient survives the attack, we find not only an impairment of the bodily actions left behind, but a worse impairment of the mind, an imbecility of attention and imagination, and almost an obliteration of memory. In some instances, circumstances of the most recent occurrence are not remembered, or the native language of the patient is forgotten. All emotions now make an undue impression; the sensibility to every emotion and sensation has undergone modification. Anger, and tears, and laughter, are each in turn readily excited; the judgment and the will, which would restrain such inordinate effects, being rendered nearly powerless. Amidst the many miseries of this miserable condition, not the least, is the change of temper which frequently ensues. A man of the most patient temper and amiable disposition, becomes irritable and peevish, and difficult to be pleased; not unconscious too, it may be, of his change and new infirmity. From year to year, in some of the unhappy cases in which disease has effected a change of this kind, the



irritability increases, until happiness is utterly wrecked, amidst alternations of petulant dissatisfaction and helpless remorse ; ultimate tranquillity being only slowly attained, as imbecility slowly advances. Even more sudden, more complete, and if possible more melancholy, changes may be the consequence of violent commotion of the cerebral substance ; and “an accidental blow on the head has been known to pervert all the best principles of the human mind, and to change a pious Christian to a drunkard and abandoned felon.”\*

In connexion with what has been said of the spontaneous origin of impressions simulating the impressions of sense, occurring in certain states of disease, it may be added that a similar phenomenon seems to take place in cases of disordered brain, as regards the emotions, which arise spontaneously, and are vehemently felt, although no real cause of them exists.

It is probably from an affection of the circulation in the vessels of the brain, before and during an asthmatic paroxysm, that so much impatience and petulance often accompany it. The extreme distress, however, may seem sufficient to produce irritability ; and asthmatics have been observed to be particularly calm in their intervals of relief. When the fit is approaching, a sort of delirium is

\* Parry, Elem. of Pathol. and Therap. Par. DCLXX.

not uncommon ; the circumstances of the previous day, or any accidental words which may have been spoken, are dwelt upon, and become the source of many fancies, which are soon corrected when the paroxysm subsides.

In consumption, the most fatal of all diseases, there is a state of the brain which prevents much of the suffering which might be expected to arise from the numerous causes of distress which are accumulated on the patient. An immitigable cough; preventing sleep; a burning fever; fits of coldness; profuse and wasting perspirations; diarrhœa; frequent sickness; daily increasing emaciation; falling hair, and strength almost hourly diminishing;—all these lamentable accompaniments or parts of the malady, weigh little on the spirits of the patient, and hopes are entertained, and projects formed, even in the hour of death. Even physicians, to whom all these signs are so familiar as hardly to be mistaken or overlooked, seem to overlook or mistake them in their own persons. M. Bayle, in his excellent work on diseases of the brain, ascribes this effect, which he says he had remarked in three physicians who had died of the malady, to cerebral excitement. I have myself known two very striking examples of it in physicians. The few exceptions which I have known to these observations, would incline me to regard this state of mind as one which is mercifully ordained; for phthisis



being one of the very few organic diseases which often appear in early life, it generally happens that its victims have death set before them before life has lost any of its charm, and whilst yet every object of human ambition appears in those colours of which time seldom fails to deprive them. But they do not *see* the death that is set before them; and commonly sink into the grave with hopes and promised pleasures still around them. I have known some, who cherished no delusion about themselves, and who seemed bitterly to deplore the loss of that life which they had but begun to enjoy.

If we had not hourly proofs of our entire dependence on a Governing Power, it might be worth while to remark on the possibility shown to us in the curious instances where the delusion is complete, of our being so variously affected by the same external circumstances as to make our perfect happiness, if it was designed that it should be perfect here, quite consistent with all the accidents of terrestrial life. No extravagance of imagination is required to admit that the slightest possible change of the mode in which our organization is affected by external agents, might create that happier state to which men look forward amidst the trials of this, but which will probably consist of no less a change of objects than of modes of perceiving them.

Exactly opposite to the state just described, is that of many individuals in whom the brain seems too readily to sympathize with temporary conditions of the intestinal canal; but shows the sympathy in phenomena of a different character. The general dissatisfaction which so many complain of at some time or other, the state in which nothing in the prospects of the world gives pleasure or affords hope, is often but a mere result of this sort of sympathy; and when the disordered state which calls up that particular sympathy is corrected, the melancholy is gone. It is mortifying to human pride to allow, that good humour may be wholly put to a flight by a temporary fit of indigestion; and that the power of attention may be lessened, the strength of the memory decreased, and all the lustre of the imagination obscured, by a neglected state of the bowels; but the fact is too familiar to be disavowed; and even the restoration and invigoration of those powers which approach nearest to what is divine, are certainly often best effected by such common means as are directed to remove the disordered states of the stomach and of the intestinal canal. There are, therefore, no persons who suffer more grievous mental disturbance than those who are afflicted with chronic disease of the digestive organs; which are, indeed, found to be a very frequent origin of actual insanity. The disordered state of thoughts, the impairment of



attention, the oppression of the mind, which was at first slight and occasional, and therefore hardly attended to, becomes more and more frequent, and by this repetition, and by neglect, more severe, until the attention cannot be controlled, and some sensation or emotion obtains undue influence, because the comparing power cannot be exerted upon it; and the judgment becomes on one or more points impaired, or the irritability of the mind becomes general and constant, and interferes with the healthy action of every faculty. Such effects are most readily produced in persons of whom the brain is most susceptible, and they are strongly exhibited in childhood, which is the age of susceptibility. A lively child is allowed to have improper food, and in immoderate quantity. The body is disordered; the breath becomes fetid, the tongue white, the stomach irritable, the bowels inactive, and the skin hot. With these changes, the mind is remarkably affected; the child neglects its accustomed play, is listless and dull, and cannot attend to its lesson; it is fretful and irritable; and either cannot sleep, or is disturbed by alarming dreams, or delirium comes on during the night. All these symptoms yield to medicine, which acts freely on the bowels; and in a single day, the child is restored to bodily activity, the breath is improved, the tongue is clean, the sickness has gone, the fever exists no

longer, and the mind is restored to its usual happy state of activity during the day, and natural repose at night. I am disposed to think, that no cause of insanity is more common than habitual, insidious, and neglected irritation of the stomach and intestines. The ultimate effects alone are generally perceived by the patient, and the previous symptoms of indigestion, or of irritation, excite little attention. The common consequences of this disordered state of the intestinal canal seem to be, certain irregularities in the circulation, either limited to certain parts of the nervous system, or most felt in parts predisposed to disease, by some state of infirmity or susceptibility, which the pathologist cannot demonstrate; but which renders such parts or portions peculiarly intolerant of such disturbance. In one case, from such a combination of causes, hysteria may be produced; in another, epilepsy; in another, apoplexy or palsy; and in another, mania. In the latter event, the mania takes its modification and character from the previous habits and thoughts of the patient; and some are melancholy, and others gay; some full of ambitious hope, and others given up to despair. Even the tremors, the causeless fears, the unwillingness to meet strangers, and other peculiarities of nervous persons, may sometimes be traced to this cause, and readily removed.

One very distressing effect arising in many in-



stances from mere disorder of the bowels, is a feeling of undefined apprehension, a vague sense of wrong committed, and retribution to be apprehended; a dislike to meet and talk to people; sometimes a great dread of immediate death. This kind of causeless fear I have in numerous cases seen in connexion with different forms of indigestion: but it may be occasioned by any violent disturbance of the nervous system. In Count Gamba's narrative of Lord Byron's last voyage to Greece, it is stated, that that distinguished poet experienced a sensation of this kind after an epileptic paroxysm. In the terrible struggles of hydrophobia, when the whole frame is agitated, but the intellect almost undisturbed, there is a wild anxiety in the countenance, and the patient will repeatedly ask, in the hurried accents of fear, "What is the matter—what is it—what ails me?"\* Sir Anthony Carlisle, in his book on the Disorders of Old Age, enumerates it among the effects of plethora in old people, of which the examples are not, I think, uncommon; and as it is difficult to persuade them that the depression they feel does not arise from debility, the means to which they have recourse for relief are well calculated to produce actual derangement of mind.

Swift, who has been already mentioned, attributed a vertigo with which he was troubled, to a

\* Dr. Pinckard's Cases of Hydrophobia.

surfeit; and the vertigo preceded madness. Lord Orrery ascribed both to a bad attack of fever, after which Swift had also become extremely deaf; this attack it was, in the opinion of his noble biographer, which so affected him, “as entirely to stop up that fountain of ideas which had before spread itself in the most diffusive and surprising manner.”

The excellent and accomplished Dr. Beattie says of himself, in a letter written to his friend and biographer, Sir William Forbes:—“a deep gloom hangs upon me, and disables all my faculties; and thoughts so strange sometimes occur to me, as to make me ‘fear that I am not,’ as Lear says, ‘in my perfect mind.’”\* He had been affected with previous pain of head and vertigo; and affords an example of a man eminent for the possession of every virtue, brought into a state which threatened insanity, in consequence of some irregularity in the circulation within the brain.

There is a mental affection to which the natives of mountainous countries, and especially the Swiss, are supposed to be in a particular manner disposed, but which has been observed also in Germans and in the natives of Lapland, and which is termed Nostalgia; it is characterised by a longing for home, and the persons and scenery associated with home. The descriptions given of this disease, and

\* Life of Dr. Beattie. Vol. III. p. 149.



some observation of a malady, approaching to it in severity, in the natives of other countries when detained on a foreign shore, lead me to think that the principal circumstances in this disorder are a disordered state of the stomach and bowels, producing mental irritation, during which the remembrance of home is the most constant, because the strongest feeling. Haller says it may pass into mania, or into a slow fever; and that hope cures it. “*Eum spes sanat.*”\* Sauvages observed, that livid spots appeared in the bodies of some who were affected by it; and that it was accompanied by fever and great debility.†

An insidious malady of the brain and its membranes, often induced in cases of which the melancholy termination has excited public attention, well deserves some particular observation here. It can hardly be necessary to remind the reader of the fate of some eminent public characters of our own country, men moving in stations of great responsibility, and harassed with the cares of state; or men engaged in extensive commercial transactions; or men of studious habits, and much ambition, and anxious minds. Many instances might be mentioned of the fatal end of such persons, apparently induced, and in some cases proved to be induced,

\* *Elem. Physiol.* Tom. V. p. 583, lib. xvii. sect. 2. § 5.

† *Nosol. Method.*

by slow disease of the brain, or the membranes of the brain, commencing and going on unsuspected until it became inconsistent with the performance of the proper functions of life ; or until it led to a result more dreadful, and, producing extreme irritation or melancholy, caused the individual to die by his own hand. The symptoms of an affection of which the results are so lamentable, are slight, often pass with little notice ; have generally excited little attention before it ; or are but reverted to after the fatal occurrence. But for this, there is no reason to doubt that medical aid would often be able to suspend the disease, and to save a valuable life. Fretfulness, impatience, irritability, and these not constant ; some interruption of digestion, or irregularity in the action of the bowels ; an impairment of sleep ; looks altered for the worse ;—these are among the indications of what is going on ; but these are so incidental to all men that they pass almost unregarded, among the common vicissitudes of life and health. To these may be added, a feeling of tightness, or of heat, or perhaps slight occasional pain, in the head ; and a confusion of mind or temporary distraction when mental efforts are attempted. Such are the ordinary signs. The medical observer has not always an opportunity of knowing more, or even of knowing this ; or perhaps he observes these things, and other symptoms, connected with the



state of the breath, the tongue, the stomach, the skin, the pulse, the general appearance, which he does not feel himself at liberty to represent the possible importance of; knowing that such appearances may recede without further mischief; perhaps fearing that after such symptoms have yielded to medicine and regimen, he may rather be repaid by the suspicion of having awakened needless alarm, than by the gratitude of those whom he may have preserved from insanity and death. Certain it is, at least, that many such cases have occurred, and have had a fatal end, which might have been prevented by proper means promptly applied. For it has been found after such symptoms and results, that there had been an inflammation of the fine membranes of the brain, and especially of that which from its extreme delicacy and tenuity is called the arachnoid membrane; indicated by a loss of transparency with an increased thickness, or with effusion, both productive of that irritation, or pressure, of which the brain is not tolerant, and accompanied with turgescence of the blood-vessels of the other membranes, and of the brain. There is probably, as in other instances of disease, first a disturbance of the cerebral functions, an irritation, attended with fullness of the vessels, but not inflammation; and the inflammatory action may supervene upon it, after it has continued for a certain time. The treatment

of such cases involves so many important considerations as to rank it among those which might most usefully engage the best attention of the practitioner. In the zeal with which the science of our profession is cultivated, or thought to be cultivated in our own day, it appears sometimes to be forgotten, that we also profess a practical art, of which the great object is to *prevent* the effects of disordered actions.

These cases are here mentioned in connexion with our inquiry concerning insanity. The unhappy subjects are observed to be irritable, but not considered to be insane. They are not mad, and therefore no one interferes with, or heeds them. This is one of the evils arising out of prevalent opinions and practice. Their insanity becomes at last declared ; but often only in the act by which life is terminated. At the moment of suicide, some impression becomes intolerable which was not considered intolerable before, or which, if the suicide was prevented, would not be considered intolerable the day after. A distracted man cuts his throat when he is dressing : if we could arrest his hand, and seat him at the dinner table with his friends, he would look back upon the frenzy of the previous hour with as much concern as the passionate man looks back on the imprecations and stamping of his angry fit. He would now attend more calmly to the cause of the disagreeable



emotion, and compare it with the many alleviations he would find he possessed. He would consider the act of self-murder, and start from it with horror. He dies because he cannot attend to all these circumstances, and because, therefore, he makes no comparison. The loss of comparison is madness, and in his madness he destroys himself.

The difficulty of determining what has been the actual cause of the madness is very strongly shown in these examples. A mental impression may disturb the function of digestion, and this disturbance of digestion re-act on the brain, and further impair the cerebral function. Facts are not wanting to show the great influence of certain states of mind on every corporeal function, on every secretion, and even on the condition of the blood itself. But the pursuit of this inquiry does not come within the plan of the present publication; although the recollection of the facts on which an inquiry into the causes of insanity would be occupied, is essential to the formation of a correct opinion in any case concerning which the practitioner is consulted.

Every one will see the practical importance of being acquainted with the various bodily disorders from which a disordered mind is observed, in different patients, to arise. Those who are acquainted with the structure of the brain, and its great vascularity, and who believe that slight alterations

in the state of its circulation may modify its functions, and that these alterations may be brought about by so common a disturbance as disorder of the stomach and bowels, can feel no surprise at the endless varieties of mental manifestation met with, both in disease, and in states considered to be states of health. In estimating the variable character, and even in tolerating the caprices of the many individuals brought under his attention in his daily duties, the practitioner cannot avoid seeing how much the temper and the feelings depend on the state of the digestion, on the state of the circulation, and in some cases on the state of the skin, the bladder, and other organs; and how much irritability arises from chronic disturbances of parts not having a direct connexion with the manifestation of mind. The state of the uterus in the unmarried, and in women recently confined, is often the cause of mental disturbance of a most formidable aspect; and if the cause is overlooked, the patient will generally be treated unsuccessfully. The very diet of a patient may be the unsuspected cause of his apparent mental imbecility, or of his unruly excitement: if not agreeable to the particular constitution of the individual, it may so affect him as to prevent the possibility of healthy mental action, and these consequences may arise, not only from the quantity, but from the quality of food. The importance of attending to this is so great,



that it will be spoken of in a subsequent chapter, in relation to the duties of medical men when called upon to undertake the treatment of the insane: but the bearing of the fact upon the subject of education is such, as to give it an interest with all who consider how they may best increase the knowledge and the happiness of those who are preparing for the duties of adult age; for it is unquestionably true, that a good diet is "a necessary part of a good education."\* But in adult age, the mind is exposed to injury by the direct use of various solid and fluid stimuli; the former rendered stimulating by art, and the latter producing manifest and well known effects, curiously illustrative of the interruptions and modifications which a disordered body may cause in the manifestations of the mind; and of the external or corporeal indications of those effects. They are shown most strongly in those who are constitutionally susceptible, in a high degree, of every kind of stimulus. Exempt, perhaps, for a time, from all the vulgar consequences of excess, its stupor, its imbecility, and its absurdity, they become the subject of a series of mental and moral changes singularly amusing and curious. New intenseness is at first imparted to every sense, to every feeling, and to every faculty of the mind; a vivacity of attention,

\* Encycl. Brit.—Art. Education.

an incredible activity of memory, and an unwonted splendour of imagination, contribute to the delight of the individual, and of those by whom he is surrounded. Nothing escapes his acuteness; every subject receives illustrations from his lips: his observations on common things display unusual acuteness, his wit is irresistible, and his sentiments are exalted. He marvels within himself to find that he is master of such vast and varied stores as are now revealed to him. From this state, which grave philosophers have condescended to speak of with praise, the step to that from which "all consideration slips," is very short, and very soon made. There seems to be an interval, during which the man is composed of two beings, contending for the ascendancy; and not being yet lost to reason, he is even somewhat amused to trace the encroachments making by his imagination over the natural strength of sensation and emotion. He perceives, well enough, that he is becoming disposed to exaggeration in his discourse and in his feelings, that he recalls some persons and circumstances with a hatred more intense, and others with an affection more vehement, than either the one or the other deserve, or than is common to him in a state of perfect sobriety. The very apartment in which he sits appears more agreeable than when he sat down; most of his worldly troubles seem rather more endurable, and the companions of his social



hours are elevated into models of excellence. Every sentiment becomes heightened : past animosities are revived, and stir his soul as deeply as in the hours of folly when they took place ; and beauties, remembered in his cups, are remembered with the forms of angels. Accident now determines whether he quarrels with his best friend, or shakes hands with a new friend a thousand times : slight provocations lead to high defiance ; or soothing words produce tears, and protestations of endless regard. In this state of the man, reason is dethroned, and prudence has entirely fled : whatever temptation may assail him, whatever pleasure vice itself may offer him, or, in some cases, whatever crime may be proposed to him, he has little power of resistance left. His will is no longer restrained by his judgment, but is driven madly onwards by his passions. All the caution, all the wisdom, all the virtue of the morning, is gone. In the tumult of the corporeal organs, the mind can assert no control ; and at last, sensation, and feeling, and memory, and imagination, and judgment, are altogether oppressed. Throughout the progress to this dismal end, we may see illustrations of successive degrees of mental impairment, ending in complete, but temporary insanity ; and it is perfectly plain, that the insanity begins at that stage in which the comparison ceases to be exerted. A good constitution, or the circumstance of a man's being

in the prime of life, or the mere habit of self-management after taking stimulants, may very much vary the effects, or the degree of control which men exercise over themselves; and it is thus not of all drunken men, but only of some, that we say, such a man “is perfectly *mad* when he is *drunk* :” and in this instance, also, the common observation is exact, and involves a metaphysical truth.

We may here, again, discern indications of greater susceptibility of different parts of the nervous system in different individuals; and may see, also, that the character of the temporary madness depends on that of the previous thoughts. For the mind is often seen to be very partially affected by the excitement of intoxicating liquors; just as it still more manifestly is after the inhalation of nitrous oxide gas, which elicits the good humour of one man, and the pugnacity of another; excites one man’s memory, and another man’s imagination; and in some, has been known to give rise to illusions of sense. Spirituous stimulus most affects the power of moving in the aged, and the intellect in the young; affects the old man’s legs, and the young man’s head; elicits the confiding nature of one, the curiosity or the jealousy of another, the inmost vices of most men; and in some cases even produces sensorial hallucinations. A practitioner well known some years ago in



Westmoreland, of very eccentric character, and addicted to hard and long-continued drinking, was once, on the occasion of an indulgence of that kind, visited by divers apparitions, which seemed prepared to carry him off; and the effects of his vision are said to have been highly salutary, as, after this fright, he became remarkable for his temperance.

The same resemblance that exists in the state of the mind of the drunken and of the insane man, may be seen in the expression of the face, and in the actions and the words. The violent gestures, the superabundant activity, the irrepressible loquacity, of the excited stage of intoxication; the unsteadiness, and the imperfect muscular actions which follow; may each be compared to the different states of different lunatics in different extremes of madness. Between the two, may be placed the happy individuals whose lively actions indicate a continual state of excitement or joyfulness, a state some degrees above the average spirits of their neighbours; and the desponding man, whose looks and actions show that he is at all times a few degrees below the point of rational cheerfulness. The dependence of the mind for its manifestation on the state of the body cannot be exemplified by more striking instances; but it is seen less unpleasantly, and scarcely less strongly, after exposure to any of the common causes of bodily or mental

fatigue. If even Bayle found relief after mental labour in witnessing the performances of mountebanks, occasional relaxation is imperiously required by less powerful intellects; and if not allowed, the mind may be harassed by continued efforts, but the production of such efforts will be of little more value than the productions of idleness. The late Dr. James Gregory, a man of very vigorous mind, used to relate, in his lectures, that when he was young, and anxious, as aspiring students commonly are, to make the hours of night as profitable as the hours of day, he found that what he read in those extra hours of study left no impression. He found in the morning certain passages which he had marked in the course of his night's reading; here an interrogation, there a sign of approval or assent; but he had no recollection of having read the passages so marked. The difficulty of paying close attention, after being many hours awake and busy, may be experienced by any one who is engaged in learning a new language. We find ourselves unwilling or unable at night to unravel the meaning of a sentence, which is revealed by a single reading the next morning. I have noticed an interesting illustration of this effect of fatigue in children, when engaged in amusements requiring a sufficient degree of thought to make the effort perceptible: as in building houses and towers with sets of cubic sections in wood. Children display very different



degrees of ingenuity in varying the figures produced by these toys, until the activity of the day has exhausted them, and the hour of sleep approaches ; when they will often grievously complain that they can no longer make a pretty house, and may be seen repeatedly making the same arrangement of the pieces which has just failed to satisfy them ; apparently from a want of power to imagine new varieties. After a good night's rest, their skill in architecture is perfectly restored. Older persons, who desire to occupy the greatest possible number of hours with advantage, will now and then find that what seems the loss of one hour will prove to be the gain of two. The value of the mind, or its degree of activity and power, demands greater attention to the state of the body than studious men are commonly willing to give ; and is equally diminished by neglect and by excess of nutritious food, exercise, and rest.

Dryden was ignorantly ridiculed by some of his cotemporaries for allowing himself to be bled, and for taking physic, when he wished to compose ; a preparation which his constitution of body, and his habits of life, might probably render necessary : but the good effect of medicine, acting through the body on the mind, was known long before the time of Dryden ; and it imparts a very high value to the art, which, by restoring health, may thus be said,

without exaggeration, to concur in the preservation of wisdom, and virtue, and happiness.

The assertion of the mind's dependence for its manifestation on the state of the body has, I know, been taken advantage of on some occasions, and been made the pretext for very gross misrepresentation; to avert which, if the frequent allusion which has been made to it can be supposed likely to cause such a consequence to be incurred, I would content myself with quoting the expressions of one whose views on this subject were never suspected of being tainted with the miserable sophistry of the materialists. "And if any man of weak judgment do conceive, that this suffering of the mind from the body, doth either question the immortality, or derogate from the sovereignty of the soul, he may be taught in many instances, that the infant in the mother's womb is compatible with the mother, and yet separable; and the most absolute monarch is sometimes led by his servants, and yet without subjection."\*

Without such manifest disturbance of corporeal function as to amount to disease, there seem to be certain physical causes ever operating to render the mind unequal; producing impalpable changes, only known in their effects. To control these effects is, I apprehend, no small part of the daily exercise of

\* Bacon :—Advancement of Learning, Book II.



many, who wish to attain to something like self-government: for the changes that come over the mind are both singular and severe. The very sensations are not the same from day to day. We one day delight in the aspect of external nature, and are endowed with a liveliness of perception attended with sensible enjoyment: study agreeably occupies, business does not oppress us; the memory is active, the judgment is clear, the affections are calm. The next day brings a change: our studies no longer give us pleasure; we regard the beauty of the visible world with indifference; we are harassed with cares that existed in the same degree, but unfelt, the day before; the hopes which then seemed rational, cheer us no longer; the memory does but revive what is painful, and we are abandoned to irritation, or to regret. Duty, interest, ambition, the common sources of activity, cannot rouse us; even want is endured, without a struggle to put an end to it, until this morbid state has passed away, and then the power of cheerful industry returns. Nor can all the resources of medical science yet prevent a recurrence of such fluctuations, which grievously mar and interrupt the constancy of a man's disposition; and expose him to all the more serious effects of such calamities or anxieties, as occurring simultaneously with those states of depression, may impair his mind more deeply and permanently. These

variations, although dependant partly on causes not yet explained, existing in the periodical, perhaps diurnal, movements of the fine machinery of our system, seem much connected with the circumstances of food, digestion, exercise, or some other article of regimen. The mind vibrates without danger to each side; towards undue vivacity, towards undue depression; and still reverts to its rational state, or equilibrium. It is only when some greater power disturbs it, that it is completely overbalanced. The comparisons, the judgment, of one day, rectify the comparisons or judgment of the day before; and the general decision is in favour of the feelings and conduct which lie between the two extremes. But when a depraved sensation, or an impaired power of applying the mind in attention, or a weakened memory, or a disordered imagination, have the effect of inducing defective comparisons, *then* the judgment of one day is erroneous, just as the judgment of the day before was erroneous; and in one or more points of feeling and conduct, the individual then becomes insane.

We see, then, that the maintaining of a perfectly sound state of mind requires not only attention to its faculties, and to the feelings and emotions, but attention to the bodily health; a truth too often forgotten in the nurture of children, in the ordering of the studies of youth, and in the voluntary pursuit of studies or of business in adult age. Patholo-



gists have very industriously examined the effects produced in the body by bad air, severe labour, and intemperate habits of life : they have pointed out the imperfect actions which result in the digestive and lymphatic organs ; the incomplete nutrition, the physical degeneration. The same causes have an action upon the mind, and tend, without question, to impair its proper functions, and to weaken its control to a degree inconsistent with individual happiness. Acting on large masses of the population from their early to their declining years, it becomes not unworthy of the consideration of the politician to inquire, how far, by diminishing the mental health, they enlarge the dominion of immorality and wretchedness ; and to what extent these effects admit of remedy.

## CHAPTER VIII.

MODIFICATIONS OF INTELLECTUAL ACTIVITY AND  
POWER BY AGE.

SOME varieties of mind there are which belong to different periods of life, and partly depend upon the growth and decay of the bodily fabric. In infancy we see some instinctive actions, which, not being required in after life, give place to others that may be improved by our own efforts. In childhood, and in youth, every sense is active; and the continual restlessness of early years consists much of efforts to exercise the senses on every surrounding object in the then new world. The power of recognising resemblances, and that power which we possess of recalling past circumstances, and which we call memory, are in great activity, as well as the spontaneous suggestions of imagination. But with the era of the passions, amidst emotions unknown before, and far deeper than any emotions of childhood and of our undisturbed youth, the imagination is more strikingly developed, and acquires a powerful influence over the judgment, and over the actions. As life proceeds, the satiated senses are duller, the passions are less eloquent, and the judgment is less imposed upon by the



fictions of the imagination; and whilst life lasts, when the judgment is exercised on subjects of which the individual acquired experience before the senses became unfaithful ministers, it is so calm and so exact as to constitute that wisdom of old age, which the old in vain endeavour to impart to the young.

But if a man of happily ordered mind regulates, in the period of his mental vigour, the affections naturally arising from his sensations and emotions, on the other hand, as the mental vigour declines, he becomes in this a second child, that he is brought once more under the dominion of sensation and emotion: he can neither well restrain the affections arising from them, nor does he now retain a strong impression of former affections. Thus old attachments yield to new and often to unworthy influences, founded on a sense of gratifications, the value of which cannot be justly weighed in the balance of an impaired understanding.

Much difference is observed in different individuals, with respect to the period of life at which the mental faculties acquire their ultimate degree of power, and at which they begin to decline. Daily observation shows us, that some men have attained that prudence at twenty, which others, with equal advantages of precept and example, do not acquire in less than ten years after that age: the susceptibility of the latter may lead to more

brilliant results, but the accuracy and composure of the former enables them to make greater and more solid mental acquisitions, and to avoid the heats and imprudencies which are continually interfering with the progress of less matured natures. It may, I think, be generally remarked, that if the youthful temperament remains beyond the age of thirty-five, the mind never acquires much eventual power; and we see, too often, that a man's mental maturity may be much longer delayed, and that he may continue to be imprudent when he is no longer young.

Generally speaking, the earlier the age at which great powers of acquirement or of invention are manifested, the more does the character of the brain, permitting such manifestation, approach to disease. Its susceptibility to all impressions exposes it to too great and to too frequent excitement, and physical life is consumed in the flame of genius. Various irregular actions, immediately connected with this cerebral susceptibility, or with the large supply of blood received by the too much developed brain,—hysteria, epilepsy, insanity, or some fatal form of disease affecting the structure of the body,—have in many instances brought to a melancholy end the flattering hopes which, in spite of all experience, cannot but arise whenever such bright and early indications of a superior nature appear.



There is, in English history, a most interesting example of this constitution, that of our Edward the Sixth. This youthful monarch, who died at the early age of sixteen, yet lived long enough to exhibit the most happy union of readiness in acquiring, and judgment in applying knowledge: his disposition seems to have been almost faultless, and his ordinary demeanour indicative not only of the singular excellence of his heart, but of the early perfection of his mind; uniting so much dignity with so much mildness, as at once to control and to fascinate all who were about him. His life, too short for the happiness of a kingdom afflicted by the monstrous tyrannies of his father, was terminated at the age already mentioned, by pulmonary consumption.

At the tender age of five, Sir William Jones evinced a capability of being affected by a sublime passage in the Revelations; and when he was at school, it was said of him by his master, Dr. Thackeray, that he was a boy of so active a spirit, that if left friendless and naked on Salisbury Plain, he would make his way to fame and fortune:—a spirit however, which, fine, and precious, and discernible as it was, did not, it seems, protect him from the merciless discipline of those whose glory it is to attract boys to the delights of literature, by the systematic infliction of degradation and torture. The talents thus early put forth were

succeeded by fruits not unworthy of them ; and though he did not live to be fifty, few men have so well deserved the appellation of all-accomplished ; acquiring, as Mr. Campbell has observed in his delightful notices of the British poets, “ a degree of knowledge, which the ordinary faculties of men, if they were blest with antediluvian longevity, could scarcely hope to surpass.”

Pascal, whose father discouraged his early application to geometry, evinced the most astonishing disposition for the pursuit of the exact sciences, when about twelve years of age. Alone, and unaided by books or a master, he drew lines and circles on the floor of his bedroom, and gave them names or signs, advancing, we are told, in this way, as far as the 32d proposition of Euclid ; when his secret labours were discovered by his delighted parent. Pascal also died before he was fifty. Mozart's greatest amusement, when only three years of age, was finding concords on the piano ; and before six, he had himself invented pieces of music ; and, from fourteen to nineteen, he was “ the musical wonder of Europe.”

Many of the greatest achievements and productions of mind have distinguished the years between twenty and thirty-five. The instance of Crichton, so remarkable, that, true as it is, it is difficult to divest ourselves of a feeling of the marvellous in recalling it, will occur to every reader. Henry



Howard, Earl of Surrey, although he had only attained his thirty-first year, when he was sacrificed to a cruel monarch by a cowardly jury, and beheaded; yet, both as a poet and soldier, had already gained high distinction. Sir Philip Sidney, the most accomplished scholar and soldier of his time, and whose very name is associated in the mind with all that is chivalrous and noble, died at the age of thirty-two. And, to go much farther back for examples, both Philip and Alexander became distinguished, as rulers and as generals, about the age of twenty; and the public career of Demosthenes commenced when he was about twenty-eight.

Among the painters, musicians, and poets, we find many who acquired very early distinction. Recollecting what was composed by Mozart, and what was painted by Raphael, and how great a name each left, it excites surprise to learn that neither of them lived to be forty. Ben Jonson acquired general popularity as a poet in his two and twentieth year; but attained his greatest reputation between the ages of thirty and forty; a time of life in which the mental faculties, as well as the bodily, are commonly in their greatest power. It was in this, the intellectual meridian of man, that Spenser composed his *Fairy Queen*, and Shakspeare the greater number of his plays. Collins's *Oriental Eclogues* were published when

he was at college; and his lyrical poetry when he was no more than twenty-six. Cowley wrote verses "whilst yet a child;"\* and the early years of Pope are known to have been similarly distinguished. Otway died in his thirty-fourth year, Beaumont in his thirtieth, and Burns in his thirty-seventh. In our own day, Kirke White died at twenty-one, leaving many affecting memorials of his genius. Lord Byron died at thirty-six.

In some instances, the mind, after displaying considerable power, has seemed to become exhausted soon after forty: sometimes, I apprehend, from defects in its original constitution; oftener, I fear, from the injury sustained in the years that have already past; from disappointment, calamity, and mortification. It is more agreeable to revert to other instances, in which minds of ordinary power have risen into greatness, or superior minds have preserved it, long after that period. Even the poetic temperament has not always manifested itself before middle age. Chaucer had passed into "his green old age,"† before he wrote his *Canterbury Tales*, the best of his productions. Milton is supposed to have commenced his *Paradise Lost* when fifty-four years old; and Cowper's first publication appeared

\* Campbell—*Specimens of the British Poets*.

† Campbell—Ibid.



when the poet had turned fifty. Of Milton, however, it is to be observed, that his *Comus* was written in early life, and that he had already addressed his father in Latin verses, when a boy.

If we turn to the philosophers, we find that all Sir Isaac Newton's brilliant discoveries were made before he was forty-five : his boyhood, like that of Galileo, was distinguished by manifestations of mechanical contrivance and invention ; and the pursuit of some of the greatest truths which he lived to illustrate, was commenced soon after he was twenty. Galileo began his academical studies at nineteen years of age ; soon after which, the vibrations of a lamp, suspended from the roof of a cathedral, suggested to him those investigations which led to the means of measuring time with accuracy. In less than seven years afterwards, we find him Professor of Mathematics at Pisa ; and his forty-fifth year was signalized by his discovery of the telescope. Unlike Newton, however, whose mind after this age seems occasionally to have fallen into a morbid condition,\* Galileo continued his immortal labours until a very advanced time of life, although quite blind and nearly deaf : he

\* The evidence on which this has recently been supposed to be established is by no means complete.

even seems to have felt up to the time of his death, in his seventy-eighth year, the involuntary mental activity which is seldom continued beyond middle age, and he complained that "he could not prevent his restless brain from *grinding* on." \*

The original copy of Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, in his own handwriting, is dated in 1671, when that great and excellent philosopher had attained his thirty-ninth year; and the composition of it is supposed to have commenced in the year preceding. Vesalius composed his system of Anatomy, distinguished by its great originality, and by prodigious improvement on the labours of his predecessors and preceptors, at the age of twenty-five. The celebrated Bichat died at thirty-two.

It is common to feel, or to suppose, that our mental powers increase with our years between twenty and forty: most men despise at thirty what they wrote at eighteen, and wonder at forty that they should have been so open to error at thirty. Haller, a name illustrious in physiological science, was in his youth attached to poetical composition, and when his house was on fire, rushed through the flames to save his poetry; but, ten years afterwards, he condemned his once-beloved manuscripts to the very fate from which, with so

\* Life of Galileo—*Library of Useful Knowledge*.



much personal risk, he had formerly saved them.\* When we begin to feel that the mind is less easily excited and pleased; we learn to mistrust or to disparage the excitement which has often led to disproportionate performance, or which has so often given place, it may be, to gloom and discontent. Successively engaged and interested in the changing scenes of progressive life, the sense of our mental privation, when the elasticity of youth leaves us, is lost in the hope that its place will be supplied by mental strength. Feeling the mind to be gathering wisdom and experience, we deem its value not diminished but increased. Adult age brings duties and cares, amidst which the intrusions of fancy would be impertinent; and we delight in the greater sobriety of our attention, and the increased dependence which we suppose may be placed on our judgment, however often it may be found to fail. When this busy part of life is passed through, many disappointments, and a deep conviction of the cureless imperfection and waywardness of human instruments, make us glad to resign our activity and our hopes together, and to let the once active and vigorous mind subside into that repose of old age, which does but precede the fuller repose of death.

For all this inscrutable drama, the organs, by

\* D'Israeli.

which our mental faculties are manifested, are precisely designed; permitting the utmost susceptibility to sense in early age, imagination in youth, reflection in manhood, quiescence in our declining years. The charm of novelty, the pleasure of mental as well as physical existence, the pride of fancied wisdom, and the satisfaction of mere rest, reconcile us to the rapid progress of the mind itself to apparent decay.

There seems no reason to doubt that all these diversities are effected by means of certain laws governing the physical organization in which, during the abode of the mind in this world, it is fixed and involved. The slower completion, or arrangement, or development, of the different parts of the brain, or the rapid or retarded advance of its substance to certain degrees of consistence, are, at least, circumstances seen to accompany the growth and decline of intellectual power. Of what superior manifestation it may be capable in combination with an entirely different organization, it is of course impossible to conjecture; but no one can have reflected upon its singular actions and anticipations, even here, without indulging a hope, that a great amplification of power may be part of the gift of another existence—"Nam dum sumus in his inclusi compagibus corporis, munere quodam necessitatis, et gravi opere perfungimur: est enim animus cœlestis ex altissimo domicilio depressus, et quasi



demersus in terram, locum divinæ naturæ, æternitatisque contrarium.”\* Such was the feeling of one of the greatest minds of antiquity, and some such feeling, I apprehend, must now and then find its way into every human breast. Invalids have described the intense delight of walking out, amidst the beauties of the spring, after the confinement of a lingering illness; and it is surely no dream to suppose, that there will be, in some purer region, a far greater contrast of unspeakable happiness, on awaking from the sleep of the grave.

The tables of insanity, published by the medical officers of various institutions for the insane, all prove, that before the age of fifteen the occurrence of that disorder is extremely rare; and the proportion of cases, which from that age until about sixty is so considerable, begins, after sixty, greatly to decline. These facts seem to be rather connected with the invariable rise and decline of the passions, than with the inequalities in the development and prolongation of mental power. The impairment produced by age is, as has already been remarked, not so much insanity, as imbecility or fatuity; the approaches of which are generally not difficult to be seen. We most commonly observe it, and old people most commonly observe it in them-

\* Cic. de Senect.

selves, as respects the memory ; but the memory only fails with the other mental powers. Musicians have told me, that as they became old they found they could not play the music learnt in later years without having the music before them, but could still go through long compositions learnt in early life, without the book, and without the mistake of a note. The susceptibility to sensations and emotions is diminished ; the attention is less excited by them ; they make a weak and fading impression on the memory. Those things which yet excite more attention, are better remembered, even in old age. Old men, Cicero remarks, in the beautiful treatise lately quoted, do not commonly forget where they have deposited their money. Although, however, the loss of memory may be partly the result of an impaired strength of attention, it also no doubt, arises in part from a contemporaneous imperfection of the faculty of memory itself. The senses become dull, the attention sluggish, the imagination is extinguished, the memory refuses to receive more impressions, and the judgment rests on the recollection of former comparisons. The mind, which held command over other minds, sinks to the common level of approaching death ; and it is well when that natural termination of life arrives before the weakened judgment permits the commission of follies which disgrace the wisest life, or at least afford occasion for that most melancholy and not



uncommon observation, that a man has “lived too long;” like the aged orator mentioned by Quintillian, —“*quotidie aliquid ex eâ quam meruerat auctoritate perdentem;*”—daily losing the influence acquired in former and more vigorous years; and, in his unwillingness to desist from exertion, forgetful of the disgrace of exertions imperfectly performed.\* Certainly, as nothing is more unbecoming than the spectacle of an old man yet eager about worldly affairs, and still a slave to all the unquiet passions, so nothing is more graceful and pleasing than that of one who voluntarily retires from the world for some short space before he must quit it altogether; and with the wisdom of Barzillai, the Gileadite, declines its restless honors, its vanities, and its cares; availing himself, for the best purposes, of that period which is happily interposed between the business of life and the termination of it, and in which the conquest of the passions is less difficult, and the preparation of the soul for its approaching change may be made with more success.

In a subsequent chapter, we shall see that the imbecility of old age furnishes some very interesting questions for the consideration of the medical practitioner. Confidence foolishly reposed in designing dependents; irreconcilable anger against

\* Instit. Orat. Lib. XII. cap. XI.

affectionate children; unhappy and disgraceful marriages, and unjust wills; make it often important to determine, whether such feelings and actions were those of a man retaining his sound understanding, or reduced to such intellectual weakness as to justify interference. Commonly speaking, they result from a loss of the ordinary control of the old man's understanding over his will; the will becoming consequently more at the mercy of the sensations and emotions. Sometimes it is seen, that as the power of attending to external things decreases, in cases in which the memory and imagination retain some share of activity, the recollections of former scenes, and persons, and conversations, become so vivid as to resemble present impressions; and the old man is busily engaged with people long since dead, and in scenes which he will never revisit more, but of which the remembrance gives to his easy chair all the variety of his active years. Fixing his feeble eyes upon a book, he reads, not the letters of the book, but the written book in his memory; and if the book falls, he gazes at his pocket handkerchief, and still reads. The impressions being presented with all the force of realities, may produce either pleasure or distress: the helpless and aged man, perhaps, sees himself constantly attended by a lively being who delights in teasing him, takes away his food, or steals his ear-trumpet; and it is only now and then that he



feels convinced that no such person is permitted to give him annoyance. During the prevalence of the delusion, he is not in a state of sound mind; but whatever form of decay the mind assumes, it does not yield all at once: it struggles for its lost dignity, and often recovers it, although for brief intervals only. An old gentleman, a great part of whose life had been passed in active public services, presented several of the peculiarities just mentioned, when approaching his ninetieth year; and sometimes the powers of the mind so far gave way, that he declared himself dead; communicating the intelligence of his decease to his family, with an air of perfect resignation; only professing himself a little scandalised to find the windows not closed on the occasion. He would desire that it might be communicated to his absent friends, that he went off easily, and request one more pinch of snuff out of his favourite box, before he was finally screwed down.

To form a just opinion concerning the necessity of interference in such cases, the character of the peculiarity induced by age must of course be regarded: but it is also necessary to make a greater degree of allowance in some cases than in others; for instance, where the individual has *always* been eccentric; for the eccentricity will probably be increased by age, and to one unacquainted with the previous habits of the patient, he may seem to

be mad, although perhaps merely a humourist, who has in declining life become a little more childish in his humours.

Other old men illustrate the observation of some of the writers upon mind, that the judgment, which is the last mental faculty in the order of development, is also the last to be destroyed, an observation which, if we regard its general application, would seem to have been more recommended by the antithesis it involves, than by the truth it contains. But when the old man retains sufficient mental power to regulate his affections, then his long experience, and his enfranchisement from all those tumultuous passions which drive so many in earlier proceed, combine to give that inexpressible charm to life out of the course in which they would fain his old age, which those only can understand, who have witnessed living examples of it; in which the individual has been seen to be brought, as nearly as human nature is capable of being brought, to be "without fault;" and as if purified and freed, before leaving this state of existence for another and a higher.

But I have perhaps dwelt too long on circumstances connected with the character and actions of the human mind, the importance of some of which can only be fully seen, when brought into comparison with those to be considered in the succeeding chapter.



## CHAPTER IX.

## INSANITY.

I REMEMBER, at a time when only some of the numerous inequalities and peculiarities of mind, with which subsequent experience has made me acquainted, had yet been presented to my observation, but when my attention had been occasionally directed to the undisturbed phenomena of the human understanding, that the spectacle of a large lunatic asylum, distinguished by its excellent arrangements, awakened in me a curiosity and an interest that I had never felt before.

On entering a long gallery, I was struck with the figure of a tall, portly, and good-looking gentleman, whose appearance differed much from the common crowd of noisy madmen. He was dressed in black, his countenance was manly and expressive, and his manner so grave and natural, that but for certain peculiarities of ornament about him, I should have mistaken him for the chaplain, or for the physician to the establishment. But cross his breast he wore a piece of list, arranged like the ribbon of the order of the Bath, and he had on a leathern apron, indicative of his being a free-mason. Advancing towards the friends who

were with me, he accosted them with much ease and affability, recognised some of them, and made familiar inquiries respecting their families, noticing the rest with some appearance of condescension. Then, drawing near to one who had occasionally visited him before, with his finger on his brow, and a look of amazing importance, he said in a low impressive voice, "Very remarkable things have happened since you were here, I assure you—some very singular circumstances." Then, turning abruptly to one of the party who was an utter stranger to him, as if for introduction before venturing to open matters of consequence, and being told the stranger was a Frenchman who had served in Russia, and had been on the staff of the Emperor Napoleon at Waterloo, he left his communication unfinished, and gazed on the foreign officer with an air of surprise, mixed with evident gratification, arising from the supposed honor of such a visit; and remarked that he knew Bonaparte very well himself; that he and the Emperor had in fact been at the end of that gallery long ago, surrounded by men with fixed bayonets, and that had they touched Napoleon, he should have been the first man to draw a sword.—Suddenly quitting this high theme, he eagerly inquired if we had brought him any Parisian trifles: it happened that we had only some Parisian snuff; but this delighted him exceedingly. He then told us,



that he had had a sore contest with the devil in that gallery, whom he met and fought, breaking two of the devil's ribs. The devil, we found, had been an unfortunate keeper, to whose physiognomy he had taken some dislike, and whose ribs he had truly enough broken. With dignified earnestness he assured us, that he had received a particular commission from the Almighty; and he invited us to enter his apartment that he might show us "the holy angels, the Virgin, and Venus;" stopping, however, to ask leave to do so from the keeper, and evidently with unfeigned submission. Over the door of his apartment he had pinned up a paper, containing a long list of the wonders within. The walls, which had been white, were written upon, in almost every part, with black letters, chiefly the never-ending titles of his greatness and power; as "Supreme from the Almighty," "Mighty Prince," "Mighty General in Chief," "Great Mighty Grand Admiral." Intermixed with these, were the names of many heathen deities; and with these, the names and pictures of Lord Nelson, Lord Wellington, D'Alembert, and others, besides a picture representing the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and a portrait of himself, with his order of list, and leathern apron. On the picture representing the Holy Trinity he dwelt with mysterious emphasis, insinuating that he was *one* of them, but that he did not like to

say any more about it just then. Then he reverted to Bonaparte, by whom, he said, though much good had been done, much had been left unfinished, which, "if he had his health," he hoped he should complete. He enjoined us to make the foreign gentleman aware how great a man he had been speaking with, "one who had received a commission from God Almighty," and a "great prophet;" and he also begged us to send him the latest reviews, which he said very positively were not to be given to the superintendent; looking, however, timidly towards the superintendent at the same time. Lastly, he committed to our care two small papers, very closely written on both sides, and every word underlined; one of them was to be given by our foreign friend to the French ambassador; the other was an exact copy of it, and ran thus:—

"In the name of the most High, Eternal, Almighty God of Heaven, Earth, and Space—I command you to procure me the following articles immediately:—a Holy Bible, with Engravings, &c., a Concordance, a Martyrology, with Plates. Some other religious books. A late Geographical Grammar, a Modern Gazetteer, Newspapers, Magazines, Almanacks, &c., of any kind or date. Musical Instruments and Music. Large Plans, Maps, Guides, Directories, and Histories of Edinburgh, Glasgow, London, Dublin, Paris, Rome,



Naples, &c. Histories of Rob Roy; Riley's Itinerary, and his other works. Histories and Memoirs of George the Third, Queen Charlotte, Princess of Wales, Princess Charlotte of Wales, the Regent and Court, Prince Cobourg, Marquis of Hastings, Lords Sidmouth, Castlereagh, Bonaparte, the Beast, &c. Wines, Fruit, Lozenges, Tobacco, Snuff, Oysters, Money, every thing fitting, To Almighty God. Answer this in three days or you go to Hell. P. S. A Portable Desk and Stationery, and a Dressing Case."

Stamped upon this authoritative document were some circular pieces of paper, on which were scrawled his signature, with the initials of all his high sounding titles. Promising to take care of these papers, we passed on to other patients, many of whom might make more striking figures in a description; but, on leaving the institution, I found that the strongest impression had still been made by the "Great Mighty Grand Admiral."

The features of this case were plainly enough distinguishable; but the question continually presented itself; in what does this man's mind differ from sound mind? It was then that I found the accepted definitions and prevalent opinions of medical authors were of little use in such an inquiry. Cullen informed me that madness was an impairment of the judging faculty; but this was only a substitution of another name for the same

thing. The judgment, or what Cullen called the judging faculty, was merely the result of the exercise of other faculties, and some prior disturbance or lesion of them was to be looked for. For a time, I contented myself with collecting from every source other definitions, but I have found them so numerous, and at the same time so unsatisfactory, that no useful object would be obtained by inserting them in this place. One common fault pervades the greatest part of them, that of resting on some strong symptom not of constant occurrence, which is made the character of all the varieties; and the language in which the definitions are given is almost always incorrect or obscure. The ambition of making short definitions has done wide mischief in many parts of medical science; and, after all, the value of a definition depends entirely on the nearness with which it approaches to a description. Errors in definition are unfortunately not merely speculative; for, to take the present subject, if there be any reasonable hope of advantage from the management of the mind in lunatics, that hope can never be realised, nor the management of the mind be skilful, so long as the condition of the mind in lunacy is not clearly understood.

I cannot say that I obtained much help from the definitions given by different medical authorities; for not only were some of them, as Dr. Good



has truly observed, "so narrow as to set at liberty half the patients at Bethlem, or the Bicêtre, and others so loose and capacious as to give a strait waistcoat to half the world;"\* but I found that when medical men were required to explain what meaning they attached to the word Insanity, they generally satisfied themselves by giving such as had been repeated by one author after another, apparently without examination; and I observed, that the practical decisions to which they were consequently led, often involved them in inconveniences, of which some had become so apprehensive as to abstain, professedly, from venturing upon any definition at all; endeavouring to content themselves, and to close the subject to all other inquirers, by asserting it to be too mysterious for man to understand. Yet I could not divest myself of the impression that the subject was not understood, only because it was not made the subject of that kind of investigation by which medical men attained a knowledge of any other subject connected with their profession; and that if they would attend more to the true physiologists of the mind, the writers on mental philosophy, who had investigated the nature and order of the mental functions, and would also observe the manner in which their own minds were exercised,

\* Study of Medicine, Vol. IV.

they would not find it more difficult to mark and to comprehend the departures from the healthy performance of these functions, than the deviations from healthy digestion or respiration. What may be said of the difficulty of studying any one of these subjects, may be said of the study of all the rest; and of the mental functions no less than of the corporeal. If we imagine the study of the latter to be more easy, it is that we pay more attention to it; and also, it appears to me, because we are in the habit of concluding that our knowledge of them goes deeper than it really does; when, in truth, we know no more of the real nature of the corporeal than of the mental functions; and what we know of one, we know of the other. We do not comprehend the nature of the movements or actions on which mental manifestations depend; we do not know how impressions are received and changes effected: but we know the phenomena which result from these movements, from these impressions and changes; we can observe the order, the connexion, the effects of the phenomena; and can plainly discern that they are wrought through the agency of corporeal organs. This is the extent of our knowledge of the mental functions; and our knowledge of the bodily functions has precisely the same boundary: we know as much of imagination and memory as we do of respiration and digestion. The limitation



of our knowledge does not prevent our observing the functional disorders of the stomach, or of the lungs; nor does any greater obstacle exist in the way of our observation of that functional disorder of the brain, however variously produced, which constitutes what we term *mental* disorder. In both cases, we can exercise our senses and our attention on the healthy performance of the function, and on the deviations from healthy performance; and we ought therefore to find no greater difficulty in defining the departure in one case than in the other. The analogy runs through the whole subject. The slightest irregularities, the most trifling uneasiness, the most minute imperfection in the performance of a bodily function is in itself a disease, but we distinguish between these and severer disorder: the least deviation from sound mind is disorder or disease of mind; and only distinguished by its degree from the severest. The practitioner does not interfere until a bodily disorder is productive of discomfort, or threatens danger to life: and he should not interfere in mental disorders until some positive inconvenience is felt or threatened. It is this application, however, of the ordinary principles of practice, to the cases of mental impairment, which medical men seem to have overlooked. They have sought for, and imagined, a strong and definable boundary between sanity and insanity,

which has not only been imaginary, and arbitrarily placed, but, by being supposed to separate all who were of unsound mind from the rest of men, has unfortunately been considered a justification of certain measures against the portion condemned, which, in the case of the majority, were unnecessary and afflicting.

The authority of Mr. Locke has often been quoted for the doctrine of madmen reasoning correctly from false premises. "In fine," says he, in his chapter on Discerning, "the defects in naturals (idiots) seems to proceed from want of quickness, activity, and motion in the intellectual faculties, whereby they are deprived of reason; whereas madmen, on the other side, seem to suffer by the other extreme: for they do not appear to me to have lost the faculty of reasoning; but having joined together some ideas very wrongly, they mistake them for truths, and they err as men do that argue right from wrong principles. For by the violence of their imaginations, having taken their fancies for realities, they make right deductions from them. Thus you shall find a distracted man fancying himself a king, with a right inference require suitable attendance, respect, and obedience; others who have thought themselves made of glass, have used the caution necessary to preserve such brittle bodies. Hence it comes to pass, that a man, who is very sober, and of a right understanding in



all other things, may in one particular be as frantic as any in Bedlam; if either by any sudden, very strong impression, or long fixing his fancy upon one sort of thoughts, incoherent ideas have been cemented together so powerfully, as to remain united. But there are degrees of madness as of folly: the disorderly jumbling of ideas together is in some more, in some less. In short, herein seems to lie the difference between idiots and madmen, that madmen put wrong ideas together, and so make wrong propositions, but argue and reason right from them; but idiots make very few or no propositions, and reason scarce at all.”\*

Although this passage contains a great portion of truth, it leaves much of the case of madmen quite unaccounted for. It is true that by the violence of their imaginations they take fancies for realities, but it is not generally true that they make right deductions from them. The case of the individual which has just been detailed, shows us a

\* Dr. Prichard, quoting this opinion in his Treatise on Diseases of the Nervous System, states that the judgment or reason of a lunatic is never perverted, and considers its not being subject to disease as affording presumptive proof that its exercise is independent of the brain: a singular instance of erroneous conclusion in so able and accurate a writer. The judgment is but the result of comparison; comparison is alternate attention; attention is a faculty dependent on the brain. The truth is, however, that the judgment is *always* perverted in insanity, although in different degrees.

man affirming himself to be delegated from God, and invested with illimitable power ; yet this man is obedient to others, and even timid under restraint. His gestures and demeanour, and some of his language, accord, in some particulars, with his imaginary dignity ; but his inconsistencies in each of these respects are continual. He is evidently unable to discern the incongruity of his dress, and of the tasteless finery of his apartment, with the functions and dignity which he assumes ; or to see the absurdity of a being who can command all men, limiting his requisitions to the latest publications. If madness consisted in reasoning correctly from false premises, many of the most indefatigable among the learned must be ranked with lunatics. It was remarked by Dr. Cullen, and it is indisputably true, that there are more false facts than false theories. Opinions, now fully proved to be incorrect, were once credited on the faith of numerous assertions relating to facts which never existed, but which were often imagined, often hastily concluded to exist, and sometimes invented. Very able works might be pointed out, which, from the title-page to the concluding page of all, are exquisite illustrations of sound and acute reasoning from false premises or false facts. If, indeed, a madman reasoned as correctly as a man in sound mind, and only differed in being uninformed as to facts, we could not condemn him to a lunatic asylum without



severity and injustice ; for why, if we admit that he reasons as well as other men, should we expect him to be more infallible in his information. The source of the error has been this. In many instances of madness, but by no means in all, the reasoning faculties are not wholly lost, but they are exerted on facts either created by the imagination of the lunatic, or connected with diseased sensation, which are not compared with co-existing facts :—there are several forms of insanity, depending on diseased sensation, or diseased imagination, together with an impairment of the comparing powers. But to found a definition on any one of these forms of insanity, and to apply it to all forms, is productive of a great deal of confusion.

In the individual just mentioned, there had been evidently occasional delusions of sense, as when the keeper seemed to him to be the devil ; and this delusion was accompanied by an inability to compare the figure and features of the keeper with the images in his imagination, so as to detect the delusion. If he could have made the comparison, the delusion would not have been madness. The belief that he had seen Bonaparte arose from his inability to compare the events of a reverie with those which had actually taken place, and which he had either not attended to, or could not accurately recall. The defect of attention, or of memory, led to insane ideas, by preventing a

comparison of realities with the reverie. He knew that he was under control, and submitted himself to it; but could not compare his actual state, with that imaginary greatness, which he asserted to belong to him. If he talked like a king at one moment, he talked the next moment like a slave; and as he could not compare, he could not detect the inconsistency of this. His mind then was altogether impaired: but neither the delusions of sense, nor the weakness of his attention and memory, nor the irregularity of his imagination, could alone have produced insanity. These might have accounted for imbecility of mind: the insanity arose from their being accompanied by a loss of the power of comparing one thing with another; the delusions of sense with objects present; or past circumstances, which had not been attended to, or which he could not recall, with one another; or things imagined, with things real. If this is the explanation of the insanity in the present case, will the same explanation be found applicable to other cases? Will it be found applicable to all cases?

Can we, then, approach any nearer to a definition of Insanity than by saying, that it is THE IMPAIRMENT OF ANY ONE OR MORE OF THE FACULTIES OF THE MIND, ACCOMPANIED WITH, OR INDUCING, A DEFECT IN THE COMPARING FACULTY?

Supposing that this is in reality the state of the mind in lunatics, it is evident that the impairment



of the other faculties, and the induced or accompanying defect of the comparing power, although in some cases marked on every attempt made by the lunatic to exercise his mind, are in other cases only shown on particular subjects:—are we then justified in saying, that those faculties, including the comparing faculty, are impaired, which we see can sometimes be properly exercised?

If we are resolved to consider Insanity as not only different in degree, but in nature, from every lighter impairment of mind, such a question, I acknowledge, presents an insuperable difficulty. The difficulty, however, is at an end, when we admit, what is undeniable, that one, or more, or all of the faculties of the mind are affected in different cases of insanity, always involving an impairment or loss of comparison, evinced on one or more subjects, or on all subjects, according to the extent of the impairment of the other faculties. One man suffers an impairment of sensation, sees what has no existence, or hears sounds which are unreal; and he believes in the reality of his visions, and of the sounds which come to his ears. He has, then, an impairment of *one* faculty, accompanied with a defect in his comparing powers on the subject which that impairment affects; and on that subject he is not in his sound mind. His memory, except of the false impressions, his imagination, except as regards his delusions of sense, are not affected; and in all

subjects except that, he is a reasonable and sane man. Another man appears not to see what is present, or not to hear what is said to him, or not to know where or with whom he is, or how he came to be where he is, or wherefore ; he has no thought of his relations, his friends, the occupations of his former life ; he imagines himself a great general, or an emperor, or possessed of boundless wealth, or power ; yet he is poorly dressed, his hands are confined, he is controlled by keepers, separated from all his family, and in all things guarded and watched as a prisoner, or as a child. Here we have an affection of all the faculties of the mind, that of comparison of course included ; and this man is unable to exercise any of his faculties, or that comparison, on any subject ; and is therefore insane on all. Between this extreme case, and the slightest case, there may be many varieties of insanity ;—on one subject ; on two subjects ; on all the subjects of sense, and not on those placed in the memory before that sensorial delusion existed ; or, without delusion of sense, an excited imagination ; in fact, any affection of any one or more faculties, which is accompanied by, or induces, a defect in the comparing powers.

Another difficulty may be said to remain, namely, that the definition of Insanity, *as an impairment of one or more of the faculties of the mind, including or inducing a defective comparison*, may be made to



comprehend many cases in which individuals show an unquestionable want of judgment, yet whom it would be shocking to class, even in a definition, among the insane. This difficulty is not in reality very great, or of great importance. In the common cases of defective judgment, or erroneous opinion, of which few people in the world do not now and then exhibit instances, there is ordinarily no real impairment in the mental faculties, but rather some carelessness or indolence in exerting them ; or, the comparing power alone is defective, which defect does not answer to the definition of insanity. Two things may be the separate objects of attention, and thoroughly attended to, yet not readily compared together by him who has thus attended to them : and the same may be said of two complex ideas, or two trains of reasoning, or any other objects of thought. The incomplete comparison is not madness ; but if the power of attending to the two things is so limited as to prevent comparison, then, with regard to such things, the mind is unsound, and the judgment faulty ; in other words, there is madness. Again, in some examples of eccentricity, there is no more want of power, than may be supposed necessarily to be implied by the existing want of exertion. A man dresses in a whimsical manner, or builds a whimsical house, or rides in a whimsical carriage. He often exhibits a proof of a defective understanding

by so doing; but he knows that he is whimsical, and will hardly defend his own oddities seriously. Other forms of eccentricity exist, arising from some defective sensation, or from impairment of memory, or from a depraved imagination; and when these lead to actions over which the individual has really no control, they show that the faculty of comparison is also impaired or defective, and on the subject of such an eccentricity there can be no doubt the man is insane. But he is only insane on the subject concerning which he is unable to receive just sensation, and to exercise attention and comparison; or concerning which his memory or imagination are erroneously impressed, and his comparison at the same time defective. A man is observed to wrap up his legs with extreme care, and to place them in a wooden box when he drives out in summer; he treads lightly when he walks, and is very careful not to come in contact with tables and chairs: this is eccentric; the man has some morbid sensation in his legs, which has conveyed to him an impression that they are made of butter. He cannot correct this morbid sensation by his sight or his touch: here then is an impairment of the faculty of sensation, inducing, or certainly accompanied by, a defect in the comparing power; and the result is insanity on this one subject, but only as regards the impression: the



rest of his conduct is rational enough; for butter will melt in the sun, is not calculated to sustain a great weight, or to bear collision with hard furniture with impunity; and his precautions are consistent with his belief.

The difficulty, then, as regards these lighter forms of insanity, is not great: and certainly with respect to all those which lie on the boundary line of sanity and insanity, it is not very important. I have already observed more than once, that if the establishment of the actual state of insanity is interesting to the medical practitioner, it is its degree and its character which alone impose peculiar responsibility upon him. All the artificial difficulties and ingenious quibbles in the world would be of no consequence to us with respect to the case just mentioned. A man may fancy his legs to be butter, and take all due care of them, without injury to himself, his family, his property, or the property and persons of others, and no one can have a right to interfere with him. If individuals have ever been confined on such pretexts, such a crime can hardly in this country be committed again.

It did not seem to me to be advisable to set out by stating the conclusion to which an examination of different degrees of departure from sound mind had led me. I conceived that

my so doing would have disposed the reader to imagine difficulties, the consideration of which would have drawn him away from the true subject of the investigation. I was desirous, also, not to be looked upon in the mere light of an advocate of a particular opinion, and disposed to see nothing but what was favorable to it; a disposition most unfavorable to the discovery of truth, and particularly unworthy of one who is accustomed to profess to his pupils, in his capacity as a public teacher, that his highest ambition is to encourage them to the pursuit of what is true and useful, to the utter disregard of all other and meaner considerations.

The plan which I have preferred,—that of tracing mental impairments from the slightest to the severest,—even supposing my own conclusions to be incorrect, is still, I think, that which ought to be followed in such an inquiry. By this consideration of the mental lesions, one after the other, and by contrasting each of them with sound or healthy mind, the conclusion has certainly to me appeared inevitable, that Insanity never exists without such an impairment of one or more of the faculties of the understanding as induces, or is accompanied by, some loss of the power of comparing. The justness of this conclusion may now be tried by selecting different examples of insanity, in some of which one faculty, in some



another, in some many, are affected; and, by observing whether or not the affection of one or more faculties would alone account for the insanity; or, whether such affection is only followed by insanity when the comparing power begins to be injured; and whether the nature and extent of the insanity depends, as I have stated it to be my belief that it does, on the nature or extent of that injury or impairment of comparison.

It will be most convenient to follow the order observed in the former parts of the inquiry, as nearly as the complicated disturbances existing in most cases of insanity will permit us.

In a former chapter, many examples were given of the sensations being diseased or false; but in which the patient knew them to be so, and retained his reason. Let us, in this place, attend to some of the cases in which the sensations are morbid, and the reason is *not* retained. In numerous instances the hallucination of the sense arises from an imagination previously over-excited; that over-excitement is disease, but not madness; it produces an hallucination, but if the hallucination is known to be an hallucination, still there is no madness; if it is mistaken for reality, then the man is mad. An ambitious general, under Napoleon, believes that he hears the people salute him as their king. A Vendean commander sees Louis the Sixteenth in the balcony of the Tuilleries on a Sunday, and

believes that the monarch calls to him by name, and creates him a marshal of France. An enthusiastic musician hears the singing of a choir and company of angels. In all these cases, such thoughts as perhaps not unfrequently have floated through the mind, are, from some disturbance in the functions of the brain, vividly represented and too tenaciously retained. The ambitious general, in his reveries of possible greatness, has often, it may be, contemplated, that like his master, he might attain sovereign power : the Vendean commander, exaggerating his own merits, has long thought himself deserving of high distinction : the composer is familiar with harmonious mental conceptions : but something has happened to give to these imaginations unusual strength. In each case then, there is a diseased state of the mind. But it is the insane belief which causes these men to be considered mad. From whence does that insane belief arise ? Doubtless, from a want of the power to compare things which are, with things which are not. Whether this want of power arises from the force of the morbid impression, or from the want of attention to present circumstances, or from the defective manner in which past things are recalled, still, it is the want of that power which leads to the madness. The general hears the voices of the people : if he looked out of the window he would see that no assembled crowd was there to hail him



king. But he cannot see this, for his attention is not in his power ; he can only hear the solicitations of the people ; he cannot, therefore, compare the deception of one sense with the evidence of another sense ; and he becomes inevitably mad. The Vendean commander sees the king in the balcony, and all the people assembled on the same occasion see the king also ; but the Vendean hears the king call to him ; which the rest of the people do not hear : it is a morbid or false impression ; if he looked around him he would find that no impression of the king's words had reached any ear but his ; but this he cannot do, and he returns to his house full of his new dignity. He does not remark the absence of any further notice of him ; the silence of the newspapers ; the neglect of the court. He cannot, perhaps, remark these things, he cannot attend to them, and therefore he has nothing which he can compare with his hallucination : he makes no comparison, and he becomes a madman on the subject of the hallucination.

The senses, we have seen, are subject to various delusions, particularly the senses of sight and hearing ; sometimes the sense of taste ; more rarely the sense of touch. A thousand instances are related of persons who have imagined some change to have been wrought in their appearance or structure. Men have believed themselves to be converted into teapots ; into barrels which were

rolled along the street ; or into a town-pump, to which no rest was given from morning until night. A respectable tradesman fancied himself metamorphosed into a seven-shilling piece, and took the precaution of going round to those with whom he dealt, requesting, as a particular favor, that if his wife should present him in payment, they would not give change for him. Others have imagined that some animal had found its way into the stomach, or that many armed knights were battling there ; and some have thought themselves possessed of a double set of bowels, productive of discordant and highly inconvenient movements. It sometimes happens, that the difficulty of persuading a lunatic patient to take medicine is removed by his supposing it to be a delicious wine ; he then drinks it with evident gratification. Mr. Bayle mentions the case of a lady who put flints into all she drank, supposing them to be lumps of sugar.

In all these cases, for they all admit of one explanation, there is first a morbid sensation. We have seen that a morbid sensation does not constitute madness. But this impairment of sensation becomes, in certain cases, productive of, or accompanied by, a loss of the comparing power ; either productive of the loss by its force, or accompanied by it in consequence of some further disease, as of the attention or memory, and then there is madness. When a man can see, hear, eat, drink, and sleep,



and yet affirms that he is a teapot, it is plain that he either has no sensation but that which gives him the impression of being a teapot, or that he cannot attend to other impressions so as to compare them with that morbid impression. If comparison were made by him, his belief would be at an end ; for a teapot neither eats, nor drinks, nor sleeps. A man who, sitting quietly in his room, believes himself to be a barrel rolled along the street, is, in the first place, the victim of a morbid sensation ; but if he could compare the sensations arising from the objects actually around him, with his morbid sensations, he would detect the delusion, and laugh at his morbid feelings. He cannot do this, either because he feels nothing but his morbid sensations, or cannot let his attention rest on other sensations ; and, in either case, he is mad, because he cannot compare one sensation with another.

A Prince of Bourbon imagined himself to be dead, and refused to eat. To prevent his dying of starvation, two persons were introduced to him in the character of illustrious dead like himself, and they invited him, after some conversation respecting the world of shades, to dine with another distinguished but deceased person, Marshal Turenne. The prince accepted this polite invitation, and made a very hearty dinner. Every day, whilst this fancy prevailed, it was necessary to invite him to the table of some ghost of rank and reputation. Yet

in the other common affairs of life, the prince was not incapacitated from attending to his own interests.\* Here was a case of undoubted madness. The idea of being dead is probably to be referred to a morbid state of sensation; and the device practised upon the prince was calculated to make the delusion stronger: but the common business of life was not neglected; it was attended to, and called, no doubt, for the alternate exertion of every faculty of the mind. But the impressions arising from these living occupations could never have been compared, for a moment, with the delusive impressions of the dead man, or the man in another world; for the comparison would have shown their incompatibility, and would have terminated the delusion. If one thing had been compared with another, the madness would have been at an end.

Dr. Mead relates, that an hypochondriacal student of Oxford, after leading a life of indolence, imagined he was at the hour of death, and ordered the passing-bell to be rung, that he might hear it before he died. He had been fond of bell-ringing himself, and finding the ringing execrable, leaped out of his supposed bed of death, and hastened to the belfry, to show how the bell *ought* to be rung: he then returned to his room, that he might die in a proper way. But the exercise taken on this

\* D'Israeli.



occasion proved so beneficial to him, that he soon recovered from his hypochondriasis.\* The sensations of approaching death, and the exercise of running to the belfry, were, in this example, not compared with each other: the strength required to ring the bell, and the attention necessary for ringing it properly, were disregarded by the student. He could not attend to them, and compare them with his morbid impression of approaching death: therefore the morbid impression remained, and so long as it remained he was insane. The unusual circumstance of a man ordering his own passing-bell to be rung, was not attended to; that is, certain comparisons were not made which would have shown him that it was unusual. Yet his sensations were not lost: he heard the unskilful ringing, and rose in a passion to rectify it; but he could compare none of these things with the morbid sensations of imaginary death.

In the disturbance of a fever, the image of a friend is seen sitting by the patient's bed, and the soothing tones of his voice are heard; but the patient stretches out his hand, and finds that no hand meets his, and that the chair is empty. The evidence of the sense of touch is compared with the evidence of the senses of sight and hearing, and the delusion is at an end. Cases have been

\* *Monita et Præcepta Medica*, c. XVII.

observed in which, the delusion not imposing on the mind, patients have been amused to find the solitude of their sick chamber relieved, at the time of every evening exacerbation, by a party of friends, the presence of whom was known to be a mere hallucination. It is when the delusion is stronger, or the comparison of other circumstances with it imperfect, that madness begins; and the patient, like the man mentioned by Dr. Prichard, will reply to the spectre which appears to him, and at the next moment speak rationally to persons really present.\*

When more senses than one are affected with delusions, the danger of insanity is greater, because the possibilities of comparison are narrowed. A man's sense of touch may be so depraved as to make him unable to distinguish square from round; but the sense of sight, and the evidence of those about him, keeps him from error. If the sense of sight deceived him in the same way, he could not well believe those around him. Two senses, the comparison of which guarded him in the first case, conspire to deceive him in the second; and prevent the comparison which would save him from deception; he is therefore rather likely to conclude that those about him are wrong, and that he is right. A foreign author, who has

\* On Diseases of the Nervous System.



collected many curious examples,\* relates one of a young lady, in whom the senses of sight, hearing, and touch, were simultaneously affected with delusion ; but who yet, after much effort made in the comparison of other circumstances, became convinced that the evidence of other persons was to be preferred to her own ; and thus escaped insanity.

M. Falret, in his work on Suicide, mentions the case of a lady who, when she merely *looked* at her skin, often thought it scaly, like the skin of a fish, but used immediately to rectify this false sensation by the sense of touch, which sense was unimpaired. Here then, was a morbid sensation, rectified by the act of comparison. If the power of comparing had not remained with her, she would have been mad with respect to the state of her skin.

The celebrated Pascal was the subject of a false sensation, representing to him the edge of an immediate and fearful precipice. To allay his apprehension of falling down it, his attendants were accustomed to place a chair near him, in the direction or situation of the supposed precipice ; and he then compared what was done with what appeared to him, and drew the just conclusion that a chair could not stand upon air, beyond the brink

\* M. Bayle.

of a precipice, and that he was therefore not in real danger. As long as he was able to do this, for he could not always do it, he was enabled to get the better of the hallucination; whenever the comparison could not be made, the delusion yet remaining, he was not sane on the subject of the precipice.

In many of the instances of a false sensation leading to madness, the sensation itself is not of a nature to be compared with any thing else, or rectified by any comparison: for example, where a man, guilty of some concealed crime, hears a voice accusing him of it. He can exercise his other senses perfectly, but still he hears the voice, and he believes in it: he believes it to be a supernatural communication, and therefore comparison with any natural object or sensation proves nothing with respect to it. A man may be mad on that point alone, and his madness may be of no consequence to himself or others. It is only when he shows his madness in other actions, which actions manifest a loss of the comparing power, in what relates to those other circumstances, that he is deemed mad. But in both cases, it is the want of the *efficacy* of comparison which causes the madness. Dr. Johnson believed that at one time he heard the voice of his deceased mother calling to him, "Sam, Sam!" He believed that his mother called to him from the other world. It



was useless to say to him that a voice could not be so heard; he believed that it could. Unless therefore we believe that the dead may communicate with the living, (which I am not prepared to deny,) we must say that this was an insane belief. If it had influenced his conduct remarkably, it would have produced those disproportionate or inconsistent actions, which arise from imperfect comparisons, and which indicate an unsound judgment.

When Cowper describes his mental infirmities, or at least the lighter part of them, with that graceful humour which was so often lost in total gloom; when he concludes his dismal story by saying, "I am under a tub, from which tub, accept my best love;" we feel that this was not the dangerous stage of his malady; that though he had a morbid sensation, it was corrected by other sensations being compared with it; and was in some degree a subject of amusement to the patient himself. But when a youth who had behaved ill to his parents, as in a case mentioned by M. Bayle, was endeavouring to read a novel, and could only read the words, "thou art an ungrateful and an unnatural son," and, resisting that impression for some time, at length became insane; then there was a loss of sensations combined with a morbid sensation, of which the result was an impossibility of comparison. He could not see the printed words

in the book before him, and compare them with the written words of his troubled conscience. When Colonel Gardiner, meditating an immoral act, believed that he saw a figure, and heard a voice ; he either really experienced a supernatural communication, or was the victim of his imagination : if the latter, it so overpowered his sense of things actually before him, as to prevent their being compared with the delusion, so as to detect it as a mere delusion. The madness ended there, and the result was his conversion to a more regular life. His power of comparing other circumstances one with another remained unimpaired ; he had no other sensorial hallucinations, and he enjoyed a sound mind. The same kind of impression has often left the mind insane, that is, has left it in a state in which either the senses were inaccurate, or the imagination excited, or the memory impaired, and at the same time the power of making correct comparisons lost. The history of religious enthusiasm contains numerous examples of these effects ; and narratives of a very striking character might be introduced to exemplify the power of an alarmed conscience in producing similar effects. The whispers of that monitor have become audible in many instances, in a sense which could hardly be called figurative ; and crimes, of which almost the very consciousness had been successfully kept down for years, have been declared under



the influence of these impressions, at the risk of the worst consequences;—things which must be quite intelligible even to those whose consciences are troubled with no crime of magnitude, if they are in the habit of practising self-examination, and refuse to yield themselves to every temptation without resistance.

Of this form of madness, Shakspeare has given us a remarkable illustration, which, although that immortal poet has frequently been referred to by writers on the subject of mental disorder, has not, I think, attracted attention. Yet it is one of the most accurate, and one of the most complete. It is presented in the character of Macbeth; in which, as in that of Hamlet, Shakspeare seems to have meant to delineate the influence of strong emotions, although of a very different kind, on minds unequal to bear them. In both cases, disorder of the mind is produced, but the species of disorder is very different in the two cases.

In the play of Macbeth, Shakspeare has availed himself, as in that of Hamlet, of that dread of supernatural appearances which seems to be natural to man; but in Hamlet, the appearance of a ghost is presented to several witnesses, and to several at the same time; at least in the first part of the play. In Macbeth, certain appearances are presented to Macbeth alone, which are invisible to others. The appearance of

Banquo's ghost, at the supper-table, is but the creation of Macbeth's troubled conscience, and not seen by the guests or by his less remorseful wife. On a former occasion, and before the murder of the king, whilst Macbeth is meditating that murder, an act in itself horrible, and especially contrary to the natural character of Macbeth himself, he begins to be the subject of sensorial delusion; and when the appearance of a dagger is represented to him in the air, he addresses it in that soliloquy which singularly illustrates the struggle between sanity and insanity. The exactness, or rather the minuteness of the illustration, justifies a quotation of several of those beautiful lines.

When the dagger first appears to him, although apparently sensible that it is a delusion, he attempts to seize it, and failing to do so, says

“ I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.—  
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible  
To feeling, as to sight? or art thou but  
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,  
Proceeding from the heat oppressed brain?”

The exercise of one sense to correct the suspicious evidence of another, the comparison, and the questioning which follows, are very striking. As Macbeth proceeds, it will be observed, that he is struggling to exercise the comparison, which will prevent his belief in the delusion; and that when he becomes fully able to do it, he triumphs over



the delusive appearance. The struggle is begun in the lines already quoted: it is continued in the following:—

“ I see thee yet, in form as palpable  
As this which now I draw.  
Thou marshals't me the way that I was going;  
And such an instrument I was to use.  
Mine eyes are made the fools o' the other senses,  
Or else worth all the rest.”

Here we observe that the delusion is powerful, but that Macbeth compares it with the reality of his own dagger: he is evidently connecting the appearance with the cause of it; with his actual intentions; and mentally accounting for it, by associating it with his hidden thoughts; yet he reasons with himself concerning the possibility of the evidence of his eyes being finer and truer than any other evidence, or the greater probability that by his state of commotion, and his disturbed feelings, his eyes are made “the fools o' the other senses.” In this state of agitation, the vision assumes some variety, whilst it maintains its distinctness; but the words which follow show us that the mental process, the reasonings, the comparisons which Macbeth has made, effect a final triumph over the delusion:—

..... “ I see the still;  
And on thy blade and dudgeon, gouts of blood,

Which was not so before.—*There's no such thing :*  
It is the bloody business which informs  
Thus to mine eyes."

Hallucinations are sometimes limited to the prevention of true sensation, no other sensation being substituted for that which ought to be experienced; and this variety of deception confirms the notion of comparison being as much impeded, in some of the cases already mentioned, by the absence of true, as by the presence of false sensations. An old French officer, who had not succeeded in reconciling himself to the almost dramatic changes incidental to the first abdication of Napoleon, on turning one morning towards the Place Vendôme, was unable to see the column there erected to commemorate the glory of French arms. Exceedingly astonished by its disappearance, he looked for it very attentively, but still in vain; no column could he see. The veteran concluded it had been destroyed by the enemies of the government, and straightway posted himself upon the Pont Louis Seize, and stoutly defended the passage of it for some time against the quiet citizens, who wished to cross it, and whom he mistook for insurgents. The impairment of sensation led in this case to erroneous conclusions or judgments, by the direct abstraction of part of the materials for correct comparison. The mind then became impressed with so strong a feeling of natural danger as, acting on



it after previous disturbance, further impaired sensation, and disabled the old officer from remarking the peaceable demeanour of the market-people and others on the bridge; which demeanour would have been known to be inconsistent with insurgency, if it had been seen *and compared* with the former belief of existing popular commotion.

It may often be difficult in cases of this kind, to decide whether the sensation is impaired, or the power of attending to it; but the effect is always the same: that which is not seen, or that which is not attentively seen, cannot be compared with any thing else; and the want of that comparison leads to erroneous decisions, and these decisions, thus arising, are the results of an unsound mind. When a madman is exposed to cold without complaining, it is not easy to say whether he feels the cold, or whether he pays little attention to it. The probability is that he does not feel it acutely; for if the degree of cold is much increased, the same madman will complain of it; it excites his attention, and torments him. A lunatic looks at his friend, and mistakes him for an enemy. He sees his friend, or at least he sees the figure of an individual before him; but he either does not see the true features of his friend, or cannot direct his attention to them so as to recognise him; that is, so as to compare the known features with the memory of the person known, or the features actually before

him with those of his enemy, which are in his mind. It is at least certain that the mistake arises from the want of comparison, which may be occasioned either by sensation being defective, or by attention being imperfect; or by sensation being deluded; or by a combination of these defects.

A madman will recognise his friend who visits him in his confinement, and will inquire after many of his family, or mention several circumstances which formerly happened; but he will suddenly fix his eyes upon his friend's walking stick, tell him that that sword will not protect him, that his rival is pushing on against him upon a black horse, with a large army, and that he will to-morrow fight and lose his crown.\* He cannot prevent the intrusion of his too vivid thoughts among the realities of life: he cannot command his attention; it is continually seduced from what is real to what is imaginary: and not being able to command his attention, he cannot exercise the alternate attention which would lead to comparison, and his discourse becomes founded on things unseen and unfelt by others, and is irrational.

The diminished power of attention may be variously shown. Dr. Burrows mentions the case of a gentleman who could attend to persons

\* Good's Study of Medicine. Vol. IV. p. 72. Mr. S. Cooper's Edition.



sufficiently to recognise them, and who was for a short time equal to the effort of conversing with them : he would begin pretty well, or could make a good exclamation, or succeed in an oath, but he could not sufficiently command his attention to go on talking; and after saying a few words he would repeat "Glory, glory!—glorious, glorious!" and nothing more; being moreover greatly displeased by the evident stupidity of his hearers with respect to his precise meaning.\* This lamentable defect had been produced by an attack of paralysis. The circumstance last mentioned, that of the patient's irritation when he found he was not understood, showed that not only was he unable so to attend as to use the words he wished, but also that he was disabled, by the same want of attention, from perceiving that the words which he used were words not expressive of his meaning. He could not compare the words used, with those meant to be used, because he could not attend to them, and the want of comparison made him insane on this particular point; made him suppose that he used words which he did not use, and led him, therefore, to be angry when he perceived that he was not understood.

Whatever example of insanity we take, we find something of the same kind produced. One

\* Commentaries on Insanity, p. 272.

faculty may be impaired, or more than one, but the impairment of comparison is always visible, and I should add, always essential to the madness. A lunatic who is half naked, lying in his straw, takes a sudden fancy to his visiter, and professes his desire to take a walk into the town with him: he is very urgent to have permission from the keeper to do so, but omits all consideration of his toilette: if he is permitted, he will walk out half dressed, and just as he has left his straw. His senses either convey to him no information respecting his appearance, or his attention cannot be given to the information, so as to compare it with the design of appearing in the streets: perhaps he has no memory of the ordinary habits of dress, and is also insensible to the difference between your dress and his want of dress. He appears to know that he is in confinement, for he asks permission to walk out; but he has no recollection, it would seem, of the cause of his confinement, or of his previous habits, so as to compare these things with the probability of his being permitted to go out whilst in his present condition.

An ambitious female patient sits up in her bed, and in her cell, and imagines herself to be a queen. She receives, and dictates to, people of rank and title; her manner is imperious, and her commands are peremptory; or she is condescending and affable,



converses with the learned, smiles protectingly on the young and inexperienced, and is courteous and kind to the old. She is yet content to remain in her cell, and in her bed, and in solitude broken only by the nurse, or by an occasional visiter. A queen in imagination, she never attempts to leave her apartment. The imperfect attention, the impaired memory, the deluded sense, and the total loss of comparing power resulting from these imperfections, are all here distinctly marked.

A drummer, greatly addicted to drinking, at last became permanently deranged.\* He was received into an asylum, but supposed himself to be with his regiment, and was frequently under great anxiety and alarm for the loss of his drum, which he imagined had been stolen and sold. He made no objection to taking physic, for he fancied it was spirituous liquor. After a time, he believed himself to be a little child, spoke to those about him as his playfellows, and seemed to recall the scenes of his early life. The want of correct sensation or attention, in consequence of which he did not perceive that he was not with his regiment, and not called upon to do any duty; the impaired memory, in consequence of which, and of a suggestion of the imagination, he believed his

\* This, with some other illustrations, is taken from cases related by Dr. Haslam.

drum to have been stolen ; the depraved sense or inaccurate attention, which occasioned his medicine to be looked upon as gin or brandy ; the further depravement of general sensation, with partial loss of memory, and complete loss of attention to his own appearance, in consequence of which he fancied himself to be a child ; all these circumstances are so many illustrations of various impairments of the faculties leading to insanity, by presenting obstacles to the act of comparison.

A young clergyman, when on the point of marriage, received part of the charge of a gun in his forehead. He was for some days in a dangerous state, and when he began to recover, it was perceived that he had become deranged in his intellects. From that time until he was eighty years of age, when he died, he talked of nothing but his approaching wedding, and was impatient for the arrival of the happy day ; believing himself, even in his old age, still young and active, and fit to be a bridegroom. The wound had in this case produced some change in the nervous organization, preventing, from the time of its reception, the accession of any new idea : nothing was ever more received which could be compared with the past, nothing added to the stores of memory to be compared with former accumulations ; consequently, nothing to mark the flight of time : and nothing was perceived of all



those circumstances, which, if seen and compared with the single impression seemingly remembered, would have shown that since it was made years had passed away, and had wrought their usual changes.

In the wards or grounds of a lunatic asylum, we often see individuals with the air of men engaged in a multiplicity of affairs. A ruined man imagines himself a wealthy merchant; the spot of ground which he selects for his promenade, he asserts to be the Exchange, and he is beset with men of business, all importunate, all seeking his attention on important matters, so that he uses violent gesticulations, meaning to keep off the crowd, and drive away the buyers and sellers who impede his steps. It is often impossible for an observer to discover whether or not this man has figures before him, through a morbid state of sensation, or whether his lively imagination of figures merely impedes his sense of the place in which he actually is, and of the persons who are really with him. But it is plain, that in either case, he is affected to the degree which prevents a comparison of places and persons and voices, imagined or represented by a delusion of sight and hearing, with the place in which he is confined, the keepers who watch, the other lunatics who disregard, or the visitors who idly or curiously observe his impatient actions, and his ceaseless exertion. In

both cases, the madness is induced by the power of comparing being lost. He either does not see what is around him, or, seeing it, cannot so attend to it as to compare it with morbid sensations, or mere fancies ; he either does not know, that, instead of merchants, he is surrounded by miserable madmen, and that all his toil ends in nothing when the day is done, or, knowing these things, he cannot perceive the inconsistency of them with his imaginations : he cannot perceive the inconsistency, because he cannot compare ; and from this want of comparison, he becomes, and he remains, insane.

I had once for a neighbour a lady, who had an inconvenient fancy which chiefly affected her in the quiet hours of the night, when she supposed herself to be exercising the vigilant and useful, but somewhat vociferous, occupation of a parish schoolmistress. The chairs and tables were her scholars, and often, as scholars are wont to be, refractory ; negligent of learning, and inclined to deride the schoolmistress, and make grimaces at her. To correct these disorders, so much beating became necessary, as to become a source of great disturbance, and occasionally of some alarm to those who lived in the adjoining houses. The force of fancy, or a morbid state of sensation, was here creative of false appearances ; she had no power of directing her attention to the passive



furniture of her solitary room, to the absence of little boys and girls, or to the time, which was night. Her memory was also impaired, for she had never been, and was never likely to become, a parish schoolmistress. These defects, preventing a comparison of things present and remembered, with things fancied, produced that permanent state of delusion, which was madness.

We have read of hypochondriacs so unhappily affected by the prevalence of an east wind, and at the same time so sensible of the discomforts of heavy rain and dirty streets, as to give way to the fancy of their being metamorphosed into animals of the eel-tribe, grovelling their muddy way at the bottom of a turbid stream. When such a fancy first creeps into the mind of the hypochondriacal person, it is but a kind of indulgence of the ill-humour which an unpleasant combination of external circumstances has brought upon him : he knows that his feelings are morbid, he has not lost his consciousness of the nature of his own existence, his sensations are not so oppressed as to prevent just comparisons, and he is not mad. But the morbid sensation becomes stronger, and attention to other sensations becomes less in his power : he mistakes his fellow-men for fellow-eels. Now, he is so far affected, that he cannot make correct comparisons ; and he is insane.

I used occasionally to visit a clergyman who

imagined himself the victim of a conspiracy which acted upon him by magnetic agency. He believed his clothes to be impregnated with powers capable of acting banefully on his body and on his mind. He requested his visitors not to regard the agitation of his voice, (which he said was thus produced,) but to attend to the meaning of his words, and having ensured attention, he would warn them of their dangerous situation, in a house abounding with trap-doors, undermined by caves and hollows, through which magnetic power was conveyed, and by which a capability was imparted of conversing with "several of the nobility, some members of parliament, and many of his own relations who were in the lower rooms." And this he would say with unequivocal indications of apprehension. In this case, there were many morbid sensations, and apparently such a loss of memory combined with them as entirely to prevent the comparison of fancies with realities.

Dr. Darwin mentions a curious instance of a fatal morbid impression in his *Zoonomia*. The subject of this also was a clergyman; who, being in a convivial party, heedlessly swallowed the seal of a letter: one of his companions alarmed him by declaring that it would certainly seal his bowels up. Filled with this terrible idea, the clergyman refused to take any food; persisting that it was useless to do so, for that nothing could find a



passage through his bowels. Medical assistance was had recourse to, and purgative medicines were taken, and several evacuations were procured. But the poor patient retained his erroneous idea of the bowels being sealed up, and, still refusing to take any food, starved himself to death. This was unquestionable madness. The absurd and thoughtless representation of a mere jester made a disproportionate impression on the mind of the clergyman; an impression so strong as to prevent his comparing the effect of the purgative medicines with his very inconsistent belief: the want of this comparison made him unable to correct that belief; and this inability constituted his fatal madness.

Exactly illustrative of the same form of mental impairment, is the case of a lady mentioned by Dr. Burrows, who imagined that a tooth which a dentist had removed, had slipped from the operator's fingers and stuck in her throat: for, although she ate and drank heartily, she insisted upon it that she could not swallow a morsel. The morbid impression, originating in this instance from a depraved sensation, or from mere fancy; the want of correct sensation; the inability to compare the fact of swallowing with the belief of not being able to swallow; all these are marked and distinct: and it is manifest, that the inability to compare

converted a case of mere morbid sensation into a case of insanity.

The distinguished author of the *Zoonomia* mentions the happy recovery of a lunatic, from a belief he had long entertained, without any cause, that he was insolvent. A list of debtor and creditor was made out for him, by which his affairs were shown to be, as they really were, in a very flourishing condition ; and by the diligent perusal of this, he lost his insane belief, and got well. This patient got well when the power of comparing returned. The power of comparing might have been impeded by some morbid impression, or by simple loss of memory of the real state of his affairs ; and diligent perusal of the list of what he possessed, and of what he owed to others, might either aid his defective memory, or directly remove the morbid impression ; but in either case it could only do so, when he was able to compare what he read with what he thought before. The experiment would often be vain : a lunatic would read the list and still retain his delusion, so long as he could not compare what he read with the delusion in his mind. No matter what mental defect might have been primary ; the occurrence, continuance, or termination of insanity would depend on the interruption, suspension, or renewal of the power of comparing.



A patient of Dr. Reid's, a young lady, writes thus to him :—" I have had the horrors of setting the house on fire so strongly impressed on my mind, that no efforts of reason have been able to overcome its ascendancy, which has so completely overpowered me, that I have suffered inexpressible misery from merely having occasion to enter or pass through a room at evening with a lighted candle, although conscious of having taken the utmost precaution ; and have even returned with a light to see that all was safe : yet has fancy, in the dead of night, painted the room in flames, with every aggravating circumstance attending conflagration, till my mind has been worked up almost to a pitch of insanity from terror." It would seem that by *fancy* this correspondent did not mean in her *dreams* ; she was therefore assuredly not almost, but altogether a lunatic : that is to say, she was at such hours a lunatic, because she could not compare facts, the existence of which she had ascertained, with the fancies that arose in her mind. The morbid impression was stronger than the true impression, and she could not make that just comparison of them which would not have failed to allay her fears.

In another example given by the same author, we read of " a person, who, although his life had been signalised by the most active and successful exertions in behalf of his fellow-creatures," brooded

over the idea of his having been all along "a useless member of society." This was insanity also: a morbid impression was stronger than the recollection of the real events of his life; the memory was probably diseased; things which had occurred were not presented to the mind with a force equal to the impression of fancied events, which had never occurred: the latter could not be compared with the former; the judgment was consequently misled; and the man was insane.

The father of Dr. Samuel Johnson was prone to insanity whenever he staid long at home, but was always relieved by change of place, and by the occupations attendant on his business as a bookseller. When part of his workshop had fallen down for want of money to repair it, he continued very carefully to lock the door every night, though he knew that any body might easily walk in at the back part of the shop. "This," says his distinguished son, "was madness, you may see, and would have been discoverable in other instances of the prevalence of imagination, but that poverty prevented it from playing such tricks as riches and leisure encourage." It seems to have been a pure instance of defect of the comparing power: the imagination was probably quite passive. Lunatics will sometimes exhibit much contrivance to effect their escape from a window, when there is nothing to prevent their walking out by the door; nor is



the knowledge of the fact sufficient to spare them the trouble they put themselves to : they cannot compare the fact with the belief ; and the belief rests on a morbid impression, perhaps on a spontaneous mental suggestion.

It is only by the supposition of the comparing power being lost, that we are at all enabled to explain a phenomenon which can in no other way be accounted for ; namely, that presented by a man labouring under an insane delusion, and yet entertaining a belief entirely opposite to it, and of what is incompatible with the delusion ; cherishing two opposite sentiments, in fact, or two opposite convictions, at the same time. I have heard a man in this state say, that he was the most miserable of human beings, but that he had every thing about him to make him happy ; or lament that he had lost all affection for his wife or nearest connexions, whom, however, he would thus allude to with tears in his eyes, and in affectionate language. Others accuse themselves of having led a deplorably wicked life, and in the same breath protest that they have never done harm to any body living ; or they will lament the disordered state of their own minds, and yet accuse themselves of not wishing to have the disorder removed ; or they will address those about them in harsh and cruel terms, and weep because they feel that they do so. A lunatic will sometimes say that he knows he is very ill, but that it is very

strange he cannot persuade himself to believe it; and he will perhaps end the sentence by declaring that he is not ill at all. Truth and delusion seem in such circumstances to be contending for the mastery; but the strongest ally of truth, the power of making just comparisons, has deserted her standard, and unless her forces can be rallied, delusion finally gains the victory. That which is false is believed, not because, in these instances, that which is true is forgotten, for that which is true is believed also; but the comparison which would show that both could not be true at the same time, and that one of two opposite things believed was untrue, cannot be exercised. In this intellectual disorder, lunatics have committed atrocious crimes, feeling remorse even whilst committing them; and others, fearing death from poison or from natural causes, have committed suicide; whilst some, like the idiot mentioned by Dr. Gall, have delighted in setting fire to houses, and have been seen to be equally glad to extinguish the fire when lighted.

Assuredly, it is no inconsiderable fact in support of the opinion of the propensities being located in different portions of the nervous substance, that we find individuals, not remarkable for inhumanity, seized with a sudden desire to murder and destroy. If, in some instances, we can explain the propensity by the supposition of a



morbid impression of a nature to excite revenge, we see other instances in which it is indulged without any such object; and men and women have cruelly murdered their relatives, or even their own children, apparently impelled to such frightful crimes by a physical excitement, which was not extended to other propensities. The excitement is so strong as to exclude every opposing emotion, and to prevent the exercise of either the attention or memory; and no comparison is made: the whole man is dominated by one morbid feeling. The degree to which this feeling admits of resistance is often a very important question, inasmuch as it affects the responsibility of such individuals for the crimes which they commit. It appears in some cases to be as little within the control of the patient, as the muscular movements are in a fit of hysteria or epilepsy. In one case, a part of the nervous system is irritated, and the effect is irregular and violent action in the organs receiving supplies of nervous stimulus from that part. I do not see how the same explanation can well be withheld from the other case. If it is extended to it, we must also admit, that as remote mischief or irritation, the presence of irritating secretions, of undigested food, or even of worms, in the intestinal canal, may cause a nervous irritation of which the result is an epileptic paroxysm, analogous causes of disorder may sometimes temporarily modify the

intellectual and moral manifestations of the individual, add to the force of sensations and emotions, impair the power of the controlling judgment, and misdirect the will.

In a work entitled *Sketches of Bedlam*, which contains a highly graphic description of many of the patients, I find the first case one of this kind.\* A man who has been a mutineer, and most willing murderer on many occasions, is affected with a constant desire to kill. He breaks through all ordinary doors ; common handcuffs cannot secure him ; he has managed, since he was first confined, to murder two or three of his fellow-lunatics ; his very dreams are enlivened by images of destruction and blood. When his body is at rest, his restless mind is agitated with imagined murders, with every horrible aggravation of the most savage and causeless cruelty. He stamps and raves during the day, often turns with ferocity to some particular spot, and delights himself by fancying that he is stamping upon and killing his enemies. “ Every voice he hears he supposes to be that of some one abusing him, and even the ducks in the pond he has charged with calling him abusive names, and abuses them in his turn, in furious terms ; and tells the steward, with an oath, that if he could get at them he would tear out their

\* Patrick Walsh.



‘windpipes.” In short, to talk of deeds of cruelty, bloodshed, and murder, is his continual solace, in the absence of the means of committing them. In this case, the madness does not arise from any mere affection of sense, or attention, or memory, or imagination: all the faculties are disordered, but the commencement of the disorder is an increase of the propensity to destroy, and the delusions of sense, and the impairment of memory, and the troubled imagination, are secondary affections, ministering to the morbid propensity. Yet, it must be remembered, that no propensity, however powerful, can produce madness, until it has either affected the sense, or the attention, or the memory, or the imagination, or one or more of them; so as to disqualify the individual from exercising the power of comparing. A man may feel propensities which he restrains; a propensity to steal, to cheat, to gratify anger, revenge, or any other passion: but he has been taught, or he feels, that it would be wrong to do so; or he considers what the consequences of doing so would be. He compares the proposed pleasure with the consequent evil; or he compares the actual sin proposed with what he has been taught, or has learnt from his own reflection, to be his duty. Increase the propensity to a great degree, and it does not permit these comparisons. It heightens the sense of proposed pleasure; it deadens the memory of duty; it prevents the

comparison of the pleasure and the duty, or of the proposed pleasure and the pain that will follow; and in the degree in which it does this, it impairs the judgment, and leads the man on to insanity.

It is evident enough that in many madmen, whose malady manifests itself in the dangerous form just noticed, the mind is not at all exercised concerning the acts which are committed; but that the acts result from an impulse which the lunatic cannot resist. In the midst of apparent mildness and good humour, a lunatic will strike, kick, scratch, or bite those near him, quite indiscriminately; and even after receiving any little present, and perhaps fervently blessing the person who gives it, he will spring upon and violently hurt him.\* Or he will call on God for forgiveness, at the very moment he is endeavouring to murder his nearest relative, or his best friend.

My observation used frequently to be attracted to an insane gentleman of good family, who had formerly held a military command. He was a man of elegant appearance, had been liberally educated, was fond of music, and possessed animal spirits which nothing could depress: he passed much of his time in playing the flute for the diversion of two or three idiots, who were taken care of in the establishment in which he was

\* Case of Job Hollinge.



himself confined. Standing upright in the midst of them, he would so inspirit these poor creatures with his lively performance, that they would dance round him; affording a spectacle curiously illustrative of the alleviations of which even their condition was capable. This man well knew that he was in confinement, and well remembered the circumstances of his military life; he was at all times willing to enter into conversation, and not sparing of his remarks on his fellow-patients, on the keepers, or on the visitors. But he was perfectly happy in his confinement, and had been confined on account of his inability to take due care of his money or of himself. There was in him no morbid sensation, no prominent defect of memory; but there was an evident restlessness of attention, and a morbid activity of imagination. He had lost the power of directing his attention steadily to any subject; and his imagination supplied him with continual images, which drew away his attention from other objects or from previous images. Such an unsettled attention afforded no opportunity for the exercise of the continual acts of comparison which were called for in the ordinary duties of life; he could not take care of his property, and he committed follies without number. The same unfixed attention prevented his perceiving the disadvantages of his condition in the asylum. Making no

comparisons correctly, he never thought his own condition less desirable than that of his physician ; and although accustomed to command, suffered no pain from being subjected to the control of persons who, if he had been in a sane condition of mind, ought to have been controlled by himself. The peculiar affection of his mind was very perceptible in his conversation ; nothing could confine him for a few minutes to one subject : if he made an attempt to dwell on one idea, his imagination forthwith presented another to him, and his fickle attention was at once transferred to it ; but the second idea would introduce a third, and the third would introduce a fourth, and so onward without end. The chains of association consequently became so implicated and confused, that he could make no comparisons, and could exercise no judgment.

An insane gentleman who was very fond of quoting poetry, was wont, from the same character of mind, to quote half a line from one poet, and half a line, slightly connected with it in meaning, from another. Dr. Haslam gives an admirable illustration of this form of madness, in the case of a man who was unable to tell any story straight on from beginning to end. He would begin, with the best intentions, and proceed a little way tolerably well ; but the chairs and tables, and all the objects around him, a hat hung up on a peg, or an ornament on the chimney piece, would



become interwoven with his narrative, and lead him from subject to subject with irresistible rapidity. We may often observe lunatics unable to attend to what is said, and to reply to the shortest question. They seem to make the attempt, and to fail in it; and the cause of failure appears to be a morbid activity of attention. The same effect, we have seen, may be produced by a complete want of activity in this faculty, so that the attention cannot be withdrawn from some particular train of ideas, or images, or from some morbid impression, and directed to present objects or impressions. But in all the cases, the insanity commences when the affection has proceeded far enough, or has become so much confirmed, as to prevent acts of comparison; which are equally prevented by a deficiency of activity, or by an over-activity, of the power of exercising attention; whether these defects arise from some primary morbid sensation, or do not. The explanation of the madness in all these cases is precisely the same.

In the preceding chapter it was remarked, that the popular opinion of madness being common in those persons whose understandings were the most exercised, was erroneous; and when we examine individual cases of insanity, we find so many which partake largely of the activity of fancy, combined with a deficient power of attention, as to make this error sensible to common

observation. Although there are cases in every asylum, in which the attention is riveted to one train of thought, or one particular idea; even that train of thought, or the single idea which is cherished, is commonly connected with a strong impression made upon the fancy, and has not become infixed in the mind in consequence of profound meditation, or in the course of any philosophical inquiry: and such cases altogether bear a small proportion to those in which the fancy leads the attention captive, and carries it from one idea to another without the power of resistance. If we go from individual to individual, in any lunatic establishment, and investigate the character and origin of the madness of each, we shall find for every one who has become insane from the exercise of his mind, at least a hundred who have become insane from the undue indulgence of their feelings. Those men who really most exercise the faculties of their minds, meaning thereby all their faculties, their attention, reflection, or comparison, as well their imagination and memory, are least liable to insanity. An irregular and injudicious cultivation of poetry and of painting has often concurred to produce madness: but nothing is rarer than to find a mad mathematician; no study demanding more attention, or more occupying it, than mathematics; which therefore not only exercises that faculty, the



loss of which is so common in lunacy, but represses the wanderings of imagination, and secures the student, during a great part of his time, from the recurrence of feelings which are always the most imperious in those who are the least occupied. So that there is much wisdom in Lord Bacon's recommendation, that "if a man's wits be wandering," he should "study the mathematics:"\* in other words, that he should apply to that which will exercise his attention, his memory, and his comparison; which will limit the movements of his fancy, and shut out the intrusion of restless feelings. The examples of insanity occurring in merchants, and speculators of various kinds, are not opposed to this doctrine; for their disorder does not arise from the overstraining of their attention, memory, or comparison; but from an ill regulated imagination, and the disappointment of feelings long and unwisely indulged. They do not become mad from pursuing long and intricate calculations, but those prospects of wealth and greatness with which the fancy, overleaping the dull details of business, dazzles and deludes them. The daily drudgery of figures may weary, but has, I venture to say, seldom discomposed the faculties; it is the sudden elevation to prosperity, or the equally sudden

\* Essays.

depression of fortune, and most frequently the former, which has caused the mercantile world to furnish so many patients for those who take charge of the insane. The crowd about the exchange, and the bank, and the courts of law, is made up of persons immersed in business, and in the cares of business, but perfectly sane : now and then we see an odd figure moving among them, in strange costume, and full of fancied consequence ; a mad person, but one never distinguished by regular labour, and but idly haunting the seats of wealth, in the expectation of acquiring vast possessions, kept from him by those who are soon to be compelled to do him justice.

A numerous class of maniacal patients consists of those whose habitual thoughts are connected with a strong impression, arising out of some single circumstance of their past life, or from some morbid and spontaneous suggestion. I have seen a sailor, who was found sitting on a rock, the sole survivor of the crew of a shipwrecked vessel, wet, shivering, half-starved, and deprived of his understanding ; and who, when removed and supplied with every thing requisite to his comfort, continued ever afterwards to shiver and complain, as if still exposed to the cold air and moisture of the rock on which he had been discovered. Another unfortunate lunatic had, from some unexplained circumstance, taken it into his head that



he had been hanged, and resuscitated by galvanism ; but not sufficiently brought to life to be ever capable of comfort more : he thought a part of his life was kept back from him, and spoke of himself as a defrauded man. In another case, a poor woman, who had been servant to a lady whose body was stolen after burial, and sold for dissection, and reclaimed by the police, became mad when informed of these particulars, and ever afterwards regarded all who approached her either as surgeons or as resurrection-men. I have seen other female patients of the same class who, having on some occasion been addressed in flattering terms by their superiors, retained, in their madness, a vain imagination that all who approached them came in the character of ardent admirers ; and lived in happy expectation of being led to the altar by a bridegroom who was to be young, and handsome, and noble, and rich, and, above all, distractedly in love with them.

The difference between all these persons, and those yet retaining the free use of their mental faculties, is clearly seen, when we compare the habitual state of their minds with those states and habits of the sound mind which approach the nearest to them. A man of sound mind receives a strong and agreeable impression from a letter that he receives, or from a book that he reads : he pursues the train of pleasant thoughts which is thus

commenced, and abandons himself to the successive images which arise in his mind: persons and places, many years since seen and left, are recalled to his attention; he imagines himself again engaged in conversation with persons long absent and far distant; and for a time he is inattentive to the objects really before him, and to the persons really about him. Or he receives intelligence which excites his anger, and his thoughts are dispatched with equal promptitude through all the ways and avenues of revengeful hostility: he imagines himself present with his wily and detested enemy; he exposes his arts, lays open all his meanness, and bears him down by the indignant eloquence of truth. His gestures, his actions, the expression of his face, his ejaculations, all indicate his excitement, and the devotion of his attention to what is not actually before him. During the prevalence of the agreeable or disagreeable emotions here supposed, a friend, in no way connected with the prevalent emotions, pays a visit to the person so affected; and the thoughts which were before so indulged, are at once restrained: they are not always restrained with equal success, for the difficulty increases with their strength; but still, in a man of sound and rational mind, they *are* restrained. He resigns his agreeable reverie, or he gives up his bitter recollections, and descends again into ordinary life, and converses with his visiter with calmness



and propriety. Or, if no visiter breaks in upon him, he still recovers himself: he puts a voluntary end to his agreeable visions, or he rejects the remembrance of his enemies from his mind by a voluntary effort. He remembers that he has duties to perform, or he recollects that it is time to go to dinner. In an infirm mind, a mind predisposed to disorder, things proceed differently; the strong impression, agreeable or disagreeable, attracts all the attention, rouses all the trains associated with it, occupies the whole mind: all this is what occurs in the case of the sound person; but in the case of the infirm person, the attention cannot again be withdrawn from the impression, the train of images once raised continues to haunt the imagination; the visits of friends, and the common duties of life attract no more attention: friends are seen no longer in their real character, even their outward appearance is unfaithfully represented, or they are not seen at all: the senses bring no information; the attention is bent for ever on the prevalent idea in the mind, or the strong and morbid impression which has been received; and, regardless of all that is about him, of duties, of dress, or of food, the lunatic talks, and laughs, and sings, in conformity to the pleasant thoughts which prevail, or exhausts his strength in ineffectual rage and imprecations.

The morbid impression does not always exclude attention to other objects of sense or thought, but

sometimes becomes mixed up with them. A poor, harmless lunatic is or was confined in Bethlem Hospital, whose insanity began early in life, and has continued until he has passed the age of seventy.\* During all this time, he has adhered to the notion that he is possessed of a large property and of numerous carriages. Part of his employment is to look after the ducks and pigs, and his exalted imagination imparts a degree of consequence to those under his care: the ducks he considers to be of a very distinguished breed, "some double high, some treble high cross breed," and some of the pigs are of equally good family. He asserts that his age is only forty six; that since his confinement he has had three bodies, of which two have been worn out. The want of power to compare objects, some of which are evidently seen, and even to some degree attended to, with the delusions which are cherished, cannot but be perceived in this instance. There is also an evident defect of memory, inducing a further limitation of comparison. If he could distinctly remember what has passed in his long confinement, and compare the facts remembered with his idea of having had

\* Case of Charles Goldney. (*Sketches*, p. 46.) It is stated that this poor man was kept in irons many years at *old* Bethlem. In the new establishment he was employed about the house, and comparatively happy.



three bodies, he would infallibly discern that this idea was untenable; and would know that instead of having lived forty-six years he had lived about seventy. His notion about the ducks shows again the defect of that comparison which enables all but himself to decide that the ducks are of a common kind: he sees the ducks as well as his neighbours see them, but he cannot compare their actual appearance with a delusion he cherishes of their being a cross between a pheasant and a game hen: perhaps to his eyes they seem to show proofs of this cross in their plumage or other characters; in which case the loss of comparison is partly induced by a morbid state of sensation.

The desire for distinction is so universal, that we cannot be surprised to find it predominating in a very large proportion of cases of impaired mind, and giving a peculiar character to the manifestations of lunacy. Insane persons will collect shreds and patches of finery, coloured paper, old ribbons, buttons, feathers, and fragments of military ornaments, and wear them with great apparent satisfaction. Some dress themselves in a fantastic manner with shawls and handkerchiefs: others paint their hats red or any showy colour, or mount a paper cockade, and walk about the house with an air of complacent self-importance. The error, which is the source of pleasure to these poor people, is produced by the continuance and the

predominance of feelings which, perhaps, always belonged to the character ; but there is a weakness of memory with respect to the ornaments with which mankind have associated ideas of dignity or importance. But for this, the lunatic would be convinced that his ornaments were such as mankind are disposed to ridicule. Perhaps to the morbid senses of the patient, these little ornaments appear more splendid than to common eyes ; perhaps he is unable to correct this delusion by accurate attention or examination, or perhaps the chief defect of the mind may be the loss of memory ; or he may fancy that they were given to him by emperors and kings, in crowded courts, or on the day of battle ; but in each of these cases, the insane delusion is confirmed by the inability of comparing one thing with another, either with another which is present, or with another that is remembered, or what is seen or remembered with what is only imagined. Conviction of the folly of the belief would be shown, if the patient could at once remember,—that ornaments are commonly costly, and regarded with respect, because conferred by those whose privilege it is to confer outward emblems, or memorials, of the wisdom or the virtue which individuals may have shown themselves to possess,—and could at the same time see, that old ribbons or a painted hat possessed neither intrinsic value, nor had been so



conferred upon him. This, however, supposes the possibility of numerous comparisons being made. They cannot be made, and the delusion remains.

Lunatics, whose station in society has been humble, not uncommonly imagine themselves generals of the earth, or emperors, or descended from the gods. The predominance of the imagination, the complete loss of memory, the want of attention to things around them, and the impairment or loss of comparison, in such cases, is manifest. Some of them perform a few actions in conformity to the dignity of the character which they assert to be theirs, but are incapable of acting consistently for any length of time. They will attempt to justify their assertions, but only by other assertions; seldom exhibiting even a limited power of reasoning, or of justifying their delusion by an appeal to any fact before them. A man who is handcuffed, and dirty, and confined in a cell, will assert, that he is the Son of God, that he had his choice of the planets, and preferred this: he will tell you also, that he preferred this, because he knew there was good living to be had in it. All these circumstances, and the whole of his conversation show, that however the faculties of his mind may be impaired, (memory for instance impaired, so that his relatives are never thought of for years), the inability to compare one thing with another is constant. If you presume to doubt his assertions,

he backs them by others, tells you he could convert you all into angels, and so forth ; but commonly runs on into such absurdity, or such grossness, as further illustrates the absolute destruction in him of that mode of exercising his mind, by which the inconsistencies which he utters could be perceived by himself, and by which they are at once perceived by those to whom he addresses his extravagancies. Thus the lunatic will make many consecutive assertions, each inconsistent with the last ; as that he is the emperor of Russia, the pope, the general of England, and Julius Cæsar. Or a man who was never master of ten pounds in his life, will boast that he has given his son nine hundred millions of pounds for his fortune, “ besides some loose silver he had in his pocket, and four pennyworth of half-pence.” Or a man will assert that he is in America, in Turkey, in France, in Newgate, and in the “ Rule of Three :” \* or that he is only forty-five years of age, but perfectly recollects what happened fifty years ago.

The tremendous political events by which a neighbouring country has been harassed, almost without cessation, for forty years past, have greatly influenced the character of the delusions entertained by those confined in the splendid lunatic establishments of that country. A great proportion

\* *Sketches*, p. 119 and 187.



of the male patients believe themselves to be persons of great importance, mayors, prefects, directors of France, generals, marshals, kings, or emperors, possessing vast territories, or extensive influence, or wealth which nothing can exhaust. Some assert higher privileges, and claim, like Alexander, divine descent. A patient confined at Charenton vindicated this exalted idea of himself in the following letter, addressed to one of his medical attendants.

“SIR,—I cannot conceal from you my extreme astonishment, on learning that the cause of my detention at Charenton is a suspicion of madness, on account of my declaring myself to be the son of Jupiter. Very well! you may convince yourself of it by accompanying me to Olympus. Do you think, that if I were a man of ordinary birth, I should possess all those scientific attainments which adorn my mind and my heart with all the flowers of the sublimest eloquence? Do you think I could have related with such vehement, impetuous, warlike audacity, the high transactions of all the republics of Greece and Rome? and could I have restored to the Iliad its previous colouring, as it sprung from the genius of Kanki, who lived many million of ages before the deluge of Ogyges? A second hour sufficed me to make an *epopée*, embracing the universal history of Greece, of Rome, and of this great and generous

France :—the same space of time to execute a painting of immense and prodigious dimensions. I think I have sufficiently vindicated my birth, and sufficiently established that Jupiter is my father, and the divine Juno my tender mother : I therefore beg, Sir, that you will have the goodness to intercede for me, to restore me to my family and to my divine parents ; I shall cherish a divine gratitude for this favour—a gratitude eternal as the life of the gods.”

We have here a madman doing his best to reason, with the attractive hope of procuring his liberty. He believes himself possessed of boundless attainments in science, a belief arising from a morbid impression, an excitement of vanity, which he cannot compare with his real attainments. He believes he has written the universal history of Greece, of Rome, and of France, another morbid impression, a mere imagination, which he is unable to correct by a comparison with what he has really been doing, or with the invisibility of his boasted productions. He believes he has restored the Iliad, and speaks confidently of the genius of Kanki, who lived many millions of ages before the deluge of Ogyges : but where is his restored Iliad to be seen ? he cannot compare its non-existence with his belief. He believes himself the son of Jupiter and Juno, but cannot compare this belief, any more than that of his wonderful endowments,



with his acknowledged detention, and want of power to liberate himself. His sensations, his imagination, his memory, are all diseased; but the inability to compare one thing with another, an inability arising out of these disorders, constitutes his madness.

I shall not prolong an examination of particular cases of insanity: if the explanation of them has appeared to be accurate, the examination must have already seemed unnecessarily extended. Examples might be quoted without number; but the explanation, if just, may easily be applied to any or to all. I have dwelt fully on particulars, some of which were, no doubt, previously known to every reader; but those particulars seemed to me to have been previously insufficiently considered. The want of uninterrupted leisure, during the preparation of these observations for the press, may have occasioned some inadvertencies,—and, in an attempt to comprehend many particulars, some inaccuracies,—but none, I trust, so material as to make the present publication altogether a useless contribution, to a neglected and essential part of medical knowledge. All that I require of those whom it may possibly invite to the same field of investigation, is, that they regard me as being more anxious for the establishment of a useful truth, than to be myself considered the first to

perceive it. If it were possible for me, without presumption, to assume the language of the illustrious author of the Essay concerning the Human Understanding, I would say,—“ I pretend not to teach, but to inquire.” \*

\* Locke. B. 2, c. 12, s. 17.



## CHAPTER X.

APPLICATION OF THE INQUIRY TO THE DUTIES OF MEDICAL  
MEN, WHEN CONSULTED CONCERNING THE STATE OF A  
PATIENT'S MIND.

WHEN a medical practitioner is consulted concerning a patient who is supposed to be labouring under mental derangement, he cannot avoid deriving first impressions from the representations of those who apply to him. I fear it is not uncommon for practitioners to forget, on these occasions, that their first concern is with the case as a case of disease, which may be cured by proper means ; by medicines, and by the ordinary restraints imposed upon the sick. The impediments, which have been already mentioned, to the proper study of cases of mental disorder ; the uncertain dangers, and the responsibility ; and, more than all, established modes of proceeding, combine with the agitation of those who make the application, to disturb and abuse the practitioner's judgment, and to direct his thoughts towards peculiar and unusual resources. Against this forgetfulness of his office and duty, the best security will be found in such previous study of the subject as I have presumed to recommend, and

in improved opportunities of becoming as familiar with what are called mental diseases, as with those which are almost exclusively considered to be corporeal. So prepared, the practitioner must give his best attention to what is related to him; careful not to let any fact escape him; admitting reasonings and conclusions with much reserve; and almost wholly regardless of suggestions designed to influence his proceedings.

It would seem superfluous to say, that this being done, the practitioner should immediately visit his patient, if sufficiently notorious facts had not shown that such visits cannot always be delayed with safety, and, what is still more extraordinary, that they are sometimes wholly omitted. Nothing shows more strongly the imperious necessity of looking into this subject than the fact, that respectable men, practising in this department of the profession, men of known character and feeling, have become habituated to prescribing or authorising force, and confinement, in cases in which they have never conversed with the patients, or have even never seen them. How many times such things have been done I do not pretend to say, but the idea of their *possibility* is quite intolerable. It suspends a danger over the head of every rich and eccentric person, which the wickedness of relatives, and the selfishness, or indolence, or timidity, of any man who calls him-



self a practitioner, may let fall upon him ; and from which surely every man ought to be secured. No one can be more unwilling than I am to visit those errors of medical men too severely, into which the urgent solicitations of others, acting on their own facility of temper, may hurry them. But the safety and liberty of men is not to be trifled with. If a practitioner undertakes to give advice in any case, he should, with whatever inconvenience to himself, never fail to see the patient for whom he prescribes. If he cannot do this, he ought to refuse taking any share whatever in the case, and to refer the applicants to others who would be able to give it that prompt attention which, above all cases, it seems to require. Acquainted, as medical men are, with the uncertain and dangerous movements of a lunatic, it is most surprising that they can ever delay a visit to an insane patient for one hour, after application is made to them : their indifference, it is to be feared, has originated in the lamentable indifference often betrayed by the patient's relatives ; for when a human being loses his reason, truly we see something in the whole treatment of him, by his fellow-creatures, which too much reminds us of the destruction of a wounded individual, of the lower animals, by the rest ; all community of feeling seems so often lost, and all pity or regard forgotten.

The practitioner, then, should *never* fail to pay an early visit to a patient who is 'unfortunate enough to lie under a suspicion of insanity. When he pays that visit, his mind should be steadily impressed with the principle that it is not his business merely to look for such evidence as may support the suspicion, and furnish an excuse for the certificate, to sign which he will probably be urged, and for signing which he is to be paid. It is necessary to remember this in all cases, and to hear all evidence, when the case is obscure, with wise suspicion. But if the practitioner is called upon, as sometimes happens, by the proprietors of Lunatic houses, he must be mindful of the many circumstances which may have concurred to deceive others, and by which he must not suffer himself to be deceived. He must remember the effects which must ensue as soon as his opinion is pronounced, and that it is possible the unhappy patient may be so situated as that *he* is his last resource, and the only person in the world likely to befriend him. This will often be the case, until men's opinions concerning disorders of the mind have undergone some change; and many well meaning persons will be found to advocate unnecessary measures of severity, and, more particularly, confinement, when the patient's case does not require, and will not be benefited by confinement. In such cases, let the practitioner



never forget, that he may be the patient's last and only hope.

The whole duty of a medical man in such cases may be resolved into two parts :—

1. To determine whether the individual in question be of sound mind.

2. To give an opinion concerning the treatment required, and especially concerning the necessity of restraint, and *the degree and nature of the restraint*.

With respect to the first point, if what has been said concerning the mind in health, and concerning its inequalities, weaknesses, and peculiarities, and unsound state, contains correct views of the subject, I do not think that in any case much doubt can long exist. The patient should by all means have fair play : there should be no trick, no delusion, no artful excitement or provocation, no deception of any kind put upon him. Pains are often taken, by those who are anxious for the removal of the individual, to influence the mode of introduction of the practitioner, and the way in which he speaks to his patient ; and there is no occasion on which he is more called upon, by his duty, to exercise his authority.

With what improper motives medical men are sometimes consulted, I have myself had some opportunities of knowing. Very few months have elapsed since I was requested to see a tradesman, whose wife was desirous of shutting him up in a

Lunatic asylum. It happened that my visit was paid at an unexpected hour, and the lady of the house was absent. I met her husband on the stairs, and with some difficulty persuaded him to go into his parlour, that I might talk to him. He had evidently become suspicious of the intentions of strangers, but after a little quiet conversation he became more confident, and entered into a detail of domestic affairs of a nature calculated to make any man insane. His present affectionate wife, it appeared, was the second to whom he had been united; his first having been a woman of abandoned character, who had wasted much of his property. He was proceeding to the second chapter of his matrimonial accidents, when his present wife broke in upon us, and, apparently suspecting the tenor of her husband's communication, began to abuse him very vehemently. His manner had, before this interruption, plainly evinced that his intellects were weakened, but his wife's mode of accosting him gave him immense disturbance; instead of allaying this, she persevered in a course of invective and abuse, after the manner of irritated women, until the poor man became perfectly frantic, and bounced out of the room, slamming the door after him with violence almost sufficient to bring down the house. "Now," exclaimed the ready wife, "you see what a state he is in: he



does this twenty times a day ; there is no living with him." To all this I made the best reply I could ; and only requested permission to invite the poor man upstairs again, and to talk to him without the addition of a word from herself. I found, however, that as my mode of talking to the patient was calculated to soothe him, his wife could not avoid throwing in a provoking word from time to time, until at last the patient jumped up again, and after venting a few well deserved curses on his tormentor, made his exit in the same manner as before. The facts of the case were, that this unfortunate tradesman had always been a person of weak intellects ; that his first wife had almost broken his heart ; and his second had married him for his money ; and finding that he was troublesome, or perhaps a little in the way, and that his weak intellects were thrown into utter confusion by passion, had learnt her part so well, as to have had him confined in Lunatic houses three or four times before I saw him, and each time with a regular certificate. The paper was lying on the table to be signed, and if the good lady on the joyful occasion had not taken a little more gin than usual, (for this was the apology of her friends for her violent behaviour,) it is possible I might myself have been guilty of consigning to an asylum a poor unprotected creature, whom ill-treatment had driven half mad, and whom

further confinement in a Lunatic asylum will probably drive wholly so. As I refused to testify to his being in a state to justify such confinement, and signified that in my opinion his wife was the maddest of the two, I was troubled no more about him. When I called one day, subsequently, to inquire about him, he was not to be seen, and I fear he is at this moment in one of the establishments in the neighbourhood.

Against such wicked conduct, for wicked it is in a very high degree, the practitioner must be firmly opposed; not only in instances in which the imperfect education of the parties gives a prominence, and even a grossness, to their modes of evincing the intentions which they do not desire to make manifest; but in cases presenting both more difficulty and more temptation; when individuals become inconvenient to families of rank and fortune; where every species of refined deception may be practised, and where wealth and patronage will be the recompense of him who pretends that he is deceived. To act with perfect probity on these occasions, as on others to act with virtue and self-command, is a part of that higher duty of the medical practitioner, which so much contributes to maintain his profession in the rank accorded to it.

Whenever, therefore, the patient is disturbed by any cause of agitation which we can detect, we



should refuse to give a final opinion concerning the state of his mind. We should even be careful that he has undergone no recent disturbance; and should present ourselves to him with the same openness of manner, and the same good intention, with which we approach the bedside of a patient in a fever. The effect of this mode of accosting those who have been treated with harshness or suspicion, is often extraordinary. A violent man will become calm, and a sullen man will enter into the detail of his griefs; even the most impatient and irritable will be evidently soothed and consoled by it: and the practitioner will thus perhaps gain the complete confidence of a patient in a quarter of an hour who, if differently addressed, would have defied him for ever. I have had some opportunities of putting this plan to practical proof, and I never found it to fail.—In country-practice, the physician who does not confine his professional exertions to such cases is frequently consulted concerning them; and I have entered houses, all the inmates of which were in confusion on account of the eccentric violence of some member of the family; have been told the patient would not see me, would not speak to me, would leap out of his chamber window the moment he saw me, or perhaps would attack me with the poker; and that if I wished to see him, and judge of his real state, I must be introduced

under some false pretence. These representations I have almost always disregarded; and I have sometimes been amused by the wonder evinced at the apparent miracles wrought by a tranquil method of talking to the patient, who would, perhaps, after a little conversation, sit down very composedly, and order his family to exert themselves in some hospitable attention to the doctor, or tell them he had made up his mind to go home with him, or wherever it was thought proper he should go for his health: and this, perhaps, when not an hour before he had vehemently declared, that no doctor should ever take him away from his own house alive. I should not venture to mention these particulars if I founded any claim upon them of having done more than may be achieved by any practitioner of common sense; nor should I think it worth while to mention at all what cannot but be known to most of those who have the care of lunatics, if I did not know, that the mode of proceeding I am recommending is widely different from that which is commonly practised, and with the worst results. The patients whom I have alluded to, as being so tractable when treated with kindness and sincerity, would have become frantic and raving under deception, and the violence which deception itself often renders necessary. When reduced to tranquillity by soothing treatment, I have known them detail all



their own irregularities, which irregularities had been previously related to me by their friends, but to which the patients appended certain explanations that I had opportunities of knowing were perfectly real; and which proved how much their observation of the selfishness and unkindness of those about them had exasperated them; and, sometimes, how much their fears and ignorance had diverted them; and how well they were acquainted with all the schemes that had been contemplated for securing them, and carrying them off; including the hopeful idea of introducing the doctor in the character of one who had dropped into a house, in which he had never been before, by mere accident: all showing me, that it was impossible to have any hold on such wild and irregular minds, except by a conduct, which, though as firm as the occasion required, was as frank and open as possible. Lunatics are, with regard to these particulars, very much like very designing men, and are best met and most easily baffled by candour and openness of conversation and conduct, for which, and for which alone, they are quite unprepared.

If, then, the practitioner is introduced to the patient in his proper character, he will soon be able to determine the state of his patient's mind; and, remembering what varieties and inequalities and weaknesses of mind may exist, without an

impairment of the judgment, or misdirection of the will, in any of the important affairs of life; will diligently inquire, first, whether the inequality or variety, existing in the case before him, is or is not attended with such an impairment of the comparing power, as necessarily misleads the judgment, and leads to irrational actions; and secondly, whether this impairment is exhibited in connexion with such subjects and actions as render restraint necessary. This is the sum of his duty; and if he is sufficiently attentive to this, he may free his mind of all artificial distinctions between sanity and insanity, between imbecility and irrationality, and between mania and monomania, mania and melancholia, acute mania and chronic mania. An imbecile mind may require as much restraint as one that is irrational, and a man who is insane on one subject may be as dangerous as one who is mad on fifty subjects. Mania may be as dangerous as melancholia, and chronic mania as dangerous as acute. The practitioner has to determine the fact of the impaired judgment; and, from the subject and character of the impairment, the necessity of medical treatment, superintendence, interference, or complete restraint. There is nothing doubtful or obscure in his duty, when the insanity is discovered, although the discovery itself, in certain cases, requires prolonged investiga-



tion. Commonly speaking, also, where the insanity is difficult to be discovered, its discovery is of the least consequence.

The fact of the patient's madness can only be established by certain tests of the manner in which his intellectual faculties are exercised, and these tests are to be found in his appearance, in his dress, in the known physical accompaniments of madness, and in his words and actions. *That* is the medical question. The *next* is a medico-legal question, and turns wholly on the disposition of the patient to injure himself or his property, or to injure others and their property; and on the probability of such a disposition, though not manifested, being suddenly developed. On the first question hangs the medical treatment and superintendence; on the second, restraint, confinement, deprivation of authority, and control over property. Medical care and superintendence may be necessary in every case; but the mistake has been to conclude, that restraint and the other circumstances are also necessary, which they certainly are not.

The strong association formed between certain judgments, and certain associated ideas, and certain external acts, including those muscular actions which give expression to thought independently of speech, often portrays the madness, and its character, plainly enough, in the features and movements of the patient. When a man, who has not

recently been exposed to great cause of irritation, is found indulging in great violence of gesticulation, and passionate exclamations, or when he sits motionless, and does not regard those who come into the room, and does not reply when spoken to, there can seldom be any doubt that such a man is not in his right mind. If, approach him in what manner he may, the practitioner finds that he cannot be tranquillized, or that he cannot be roused; of that man's insanity there can be no doubt or question: but the practitioner must first vary his modes of approach; must do all that he can devise to allay what may be temporary, though inordinate passion, or to soothe what may be deep and speechless, though temporary grief, before he comes to this conclusion.

The practitioner is generally deeply impressed with an idea of the difficulty of detecting madness, if the madman does not choose that he should see it. The reluctance of a patient to allow opportunities for ascertaining the actual state of his mind, is certainly often greatest when the disorder most requires attention; and if a man, knowing himself to be suspected of insanity, evades those who endeavour to see and converse with him, although it would not be right to set him down as insane, on account of such conduct, the previous suspicion of his insanity would be not a little confirmed by



it; and the suspicion is alone sufficient to justify watching.

When the reluctance appears to be invincible, the best way is to tell the patient that you remark certain singularities about him, which you know to have given his friends some anxiety, and which are well understood by medical men to indicate disordered health; that such disorder, if not attended to, will affect his mind; and that unless he will concur in what you recommend, as relates to the care of his bodily health, he will eventually require restraint. It can hardly be imagined that this conversation would give much irritation to a man of perfectly sound mind; or even to an eccentric man; he might feel surprised, and not very much pleased, but there would be little risk of mistaking the natural expression of such feelings for the violence, expressed or half-suppressed, of a man really insane. Whatever danger of mistake existed, however, might be lessened by the care which a humane practitioner would take in every case, to allay the irritation he had thus occasioned. He would represent, that his intentions were friendly, that his wish was to protect him, that no one wished to interfere with the patient, excepting so far as the state of his health seemed to demand; and he would endeavour to affect his feelings by representing the concern and alarm of his relatives.

If, notwithstanding all these kind efforts, the merely eccentric man should be ungovernably angry, his anger would show, I think, that his oddity of mind was very nearly allied to madness, and required some attention. If, in any case, it produced more violence, and the same violence was repeated in a few hours, or after some days, or whenever the subject was referred to, and however delicately and kindly referred to, the suspicion of the patient's madness would be greatly, if not wholly, confirmed. In general, the reply of a patient in a state of morbid excitement is, that he never was so well in his life, and this declaration is accompanied with some boasting or extravagance, clearly enough indicating the excitement. The same confirmation would be given by the patient's persevering in an obstinate silence for many hours or days; which, although a person of very bad temper might do so, would still show that the bad temper was even itself a disease of the mind. In the generality of cases, the difficulty is not great; and the patient will confide the state and the care, both of his mind and body, to a practitioner who accosts him and reasons with him as a friend. If he will not, the practitioner must employ his means of observation as well as he can.

Whatever deception we may suspect in the patient, still, if he complains in quiet terms, asserts his sanity without vehemence, assigns mo-



tives, even of an interested and dishonest kind, for the conduct of his relatives, without passion, or with no more than natural warmth, we must not allow ourselves to be so influenced by a good opinion of any other party, either as respects their probity or judgment, as to be heedless of this demeanour. The case should engage our serious attention ; all the time that can be spared must be given to its investigation, and our own conviction alone must guide us at last. That kind of conduct may give great offence, may be very prejudicial to our immediate interests, but the opposite conduct would be a crime, and a crime attended with unpardonable cruelty.

Among the attributes of a perfect mind, has been enumerated the power of perfectly regulating the expression of the thoughts and affections. The manifestation of this power is so easily observed in speech and gesture, that its varieties and impairments are among those things which we most familiarly observe. But what is merely matter of common observation and passing remark among unprofessional persons, is often, to the medical observer, a source of very important information. There is certainly something more in physiognomy than the mere result of habitual muscular actions. The external parts of the face derive from the original constitution of each individual a peculiarity of character, independent, in the first instance, of

habitual affections or of features. It would seem as if each individual were but a physical organization, animated by a nervous constitution of a distinct quality, influencing all the expression and all the character. The affections, also, associated with the same constitution of nervous system, the susceptibility to impressions or emotions, the passions of each individual, soon render the physiognomical expression more intense; and when speech is acquired, the combined power of gesture and words gives to each character that strong external manifestation, concerning which, if it is sufficiently attended to, it is almost impossible to be deceived. The science of physiognomy has been discredited by the labours of those who have referred too much to permanent forms, and too little to the expressive delineation of varying emotions. Whoever wishes to be a correct observer, must certainly avoid drawing conclusions concerning the character from the appearances of the face in repose. It is the actions of the muscles of the face, taken together with those of the trunk and limbs, conjoined with the tone and character of the voice, which reveal the whole man; and as far as my own observation has extended, and after some attention to a subject which a practitioner finds extremely useful to him, infallibly revealed. There are many among those who have merely pursued observations of this kind for the sake of



the amusement they bring, who are enabled very accurately to ascertain the rank and character of most of the individuals whom they see ; or even to conjecture, with no small degree of exactness, the pursuits and history of many of them. They are aided in this kind of divination by an accurate observation of modes of dress, which in fact are generally most expressive indications of character. Those who have the care of lunatics well know, though they cannot define, certain characters of the lunatics' countenance, which the most masterly dissembling cannot conceal from one who has known the same face when that peculiar look was not yet acquired ; and I have repeatedly observed, in persons disposed to maniacal paroxysms, a warning of the attack, in the altered tone of the voice or manner of speaking ; and in patients easily excited to delirium by fever, I have found the same circumstance continue to indicate the lingering of the malady, when other symptoms would have supported the belief of the disorder being at an end. The dress also of a lunatic is almost always odd and peculiar ; and there are singularities of mind which manifest themselves chiefly by some eccentricity in this particular. The very mode of wearing the hat will differ in the same man, in his sane and in his insane state. It prepares us for the application of this kind of knowledge, to remark the diversity of countenance, of modes of speaking,

of tones of voice, of gesture, and of dress, in men of different measures of intellectual power. Habit, and systematic effort, may have led to a control of all these indications in ordinary circumstances, but agitation, excitement, a great occasion of exertion, cause all that is the result of mere art to be thrown off; and under such circumstances no man can appear to be what he is not. The most guarded countenance, the most measured voice, the most restrained gesture, yields to strong and real emotion; and the tones, and the manner, and the person, and the face, speak a language in which there is no deception. Nor can any art or care prevent the more ordinary revelation of what is really most habitual to the mind, under circumstances even of a trifling kind: something is always occurring to throw the most cautious dissembler off his guard.

As the mind which approaches nearest to the perfection that has been spoken of in a former chapter would be indicated by composure of countenance, and dignity of gesture, and tones of voice capable of command or of persuasion; so every departure from it is signalised by some deterioration in these particulars; and we read the ardent character of one, the avarice of another, and the ferocity of a third, in the cast of his features, in his manner of speaking, or in his very walk. The man whose attention is habitually exerted, employs



tones and modes of speech differing very widely from those of the imaginative and the fickle ; and the man whose judgment is exercised differs as widely, in his manner of expressing his ideas, from the vapid and pretending. Not only the tones and manner, but the very words are different in the different instances : one speaks only what is necessary ; another denies verbal expression to his thoughts ; another speaks all that he knows, and all that he thinks, without consideration of the mischief which he works, or the pain which he inflicts, or the confidence which he betrays. The gesticulation and the dress show equal diversities ; and all these external signs are so affected in certain states of excitement, and in degrees of drunkenness, as to indicate in the plainest possible manner the extent to which the mental operations are disturbed or interrupted.

A medical observer ought to be well acquainted with all the varieties of expression which indicate the growth, actual state, and decline of mental vigour, from the early days in which the widely opened eyes, and often turning head, and activity which only yields to sleep, indicate the alacrity of the child's senses ; and through those years in which the cares and business of the world, and meditation, or suffering, or crime, effect their changes in the countenance ; and even to that declining age when, as the poet has expressed it—

—“ Nature, as it grows again towards earth,  
Is fashion'd for the journey, dull, and heavy ;”\*

or when, to speak more correctly, the bodily organs are yielding to the inevitable law of decay, and the mind retires within itself, no more to be strongly roused by external impressions.

The peculiar expression in the face of the blind, the fixedness, and slight elevation or depression, of the lower part of the face, attendant on the effort made to steady and direct the organ of hearing, is not less characteristic than the cautious extension of their hands in walking. The attentive gaze, and half opened mouth of the deaf, is often equally conspicuous. The vacant countenance of the thoughtless, the dreamy look of the absent man, the wildness of face of the victim of a disorderly imagination, are all more or less observable in all the cases where the peculiar mental character exists ; and the more the observation has been exercised on these appearances, the greater probability is there that the peculiar manifestations of Insanity will be recognized.

Such observations will appear slight to those only who never allow themselves to be in doubt, but who write a certificate whenever they are required to do so.

We may converse with a lunatic for some time,

\* Cowper.



and not come near the subject of his lunacy; but at last something will touch upon it, and declare it. It is perfectly allowable to try his manner of treating the most varied topics; and the most common and familiar ones may be as likely to show his insanity as any other. He may get very well over the formalities of what appears to him to be a mere morning call; he may even get creditably through any topic of immediate public interest; but if his attention is led from thence to what is jocose, he will sometimes break out, all at once, into the most imbecile extravagance; or some accidental observation will show that he meditates the most impracticable exertions and achievements.

There is something, however, connected with this subject, which is too heedlessly passed over: the true end of such investigations is lost sight of in a search after quibbles, or in a miserable display of mental acuteness. Medical men imagine they are called upon to exhibit something wonderful on such occasions; a depth of resource, a keenness of investigation, and a felicity of deception; forgetting, all the while, for what end they are or ought to be at all consulted.

Lord Erskine, in the course of his defence of Hadfield, observed, that he remembered a man who indicted another for imprisoning him; and no art of the counsel (Erskine himself) could draw from him an indication of disordered mind. But

when Dr. Sims appeared in court, the man addressed him as the Lord and Saviour of mankind. On account of this extravagance, the person indicted by him was acquitted. But the man persevered, brought another indictment, and well remembering what had caused the former to fail, could not on this second occasion be brought to say a syllable indicative of his mental delusion. Now, cases of this kind are quoted in medical books to show the difficulty of proving insanity: but they show us something more.

For where the difficulty of eliciting a proof of disordered mind is so great, where the disorder is so limited, and so seldom evinced, what possible right can any one have to interfere with, or to imprison any man so afflicted? Assuredly no more right than to imprison a man for being short sighted, or a little lame of one leg. Unless the man, mentioned by Lord Erskine was disposed, in consequence of his belief in the real presence of the Saviour, to inflict injury on any one or on himself, or unless it led him to neglect his affairs and his family, those who confined him were justly indicted for the false imprisonment, and ought to have been punished. An unfortunate gentleman fancies that a princess is in love with him, a very harmless fancy in itself; he wanders about the woods, or spends his romantic days on the banks of a river, and meditates on his passion.



Surely he might spend his time less innocently than this ! He carves the name of his beloved on trees ; he indites moving letters to her in cherry juice. He fancies himself debarred from seeing the face he adores ; and thinks that he is a prisoner in some high tower which overlooks the flood : fancies foolish enough, but certainly not very dangerous ! He commits his letter to the guardianship of the river, and bids the waters "flow on," and 'ere they reach the sea, convey his written words to the bower of his mistress. There is nothing very criminal in all this. But the poor man has money, and relations who want it. Instead therefore of being allowed to become tired of his fancies, which he would be in time, he is waylaid, forcibly seized, carried off to a private madhouse, and inclosed within some dismal yard, with none but lunatics for his companions. By some rare accident, an opportunity is given of investigating his real state, in a court of law. Irritated, harassed, vexed, and perhaps of a disposition to shrink from publicity of every kind, every artifice of cultivated and practised minds is exerted to confuse him, and to make him contradict himself ; the most dexterous questions, the most artful insinuations, are by turns levelled at him. And all in vain : the poor man is simple enough, but shows no madness. At last comes forth some hired wretch who has watched him in his days of idle wandering, observed all his

movements, and dogged his path for evidence ; and because the suspected man will not abandon his princess, or does not deny the affair of the cherry-juice, there arises a sound of triumph among his relatives ; learned men felicitate themselves on having discovered what was so difficult to be discovered ; the cause is at an end ; and the foolish lover is deprived of his property and of his liberty, and sent back to his horrible imprisonment.

Let me repeat, that the medical man has a plain duty to perform, which requires no arts of this kind. He has to ascertain whether or not the functions of the intellect are disturbed, and require the aid of medicines directed to its relief by certain effects they produce on the body : and he has to determine whether the degree or character of the disturbance is such as to make the patient dangerous to himself or to others, either as regards person or property. The decision of the first question is often quite distinct from that of the second : the interference of medicine is required in most cases of disturbed mind ; personal restraint may be required in many ; but the degrees of it which are required in different cases vary, as the cases themselves vary, from the slightest to the most complete ; and complete restraint is very rarely required.

When the patient has not been rendered irritable



or suspicious by the conduct of those about him, it is commonly not difficult to discover the nature of his mental malady. He is ready to communicate his sense of superlative happiness, or his feelings of hopelessness and despondency; he will relate his visions, and boast of his powers, and exultingly proclaim his large intentions. If he has not been long thus affected, it will be found no difficult matter to weaken the force of all these erroneous impressions; if he tells you that he has seen a vision, it will not be very difficult to get him to allow that it may have been an ordinary dream, on which no stress is to be laid; if he is wandering and volatile in his discourse, he may still be stopped, and brought to quiet conversation; if he talks of imagined things as if they were real, he can still be made to see that they are but imaginations after all. It is true that he will relapse into his errors, even before you leave him; but the errors have not yet taken deep root. He has not wholly lost the power of comparing one thing with another, but he exerts the power with difficulty and unsteadily. Something is oppressing, impeding, or obstructing that faculty. Into this cause of oppression, or impediment, or obstruction, the practitioner must carefully inquire.

The subsequent proceedings of the medical practitioner, always supposing that he no longer acts indiscriminately in these cases, must be deter-

mined, in a great measure, by the cause of the mental affection itself. That cause will probably be found to be one of those already alluded to as producing temporary inequalities of mind, but the operation of which has, in the case of the insane person, more deeply affected the understanding. Some stimulus may have been withdrawn, or some emotion may have acted too much as a stimulus. Disease or age may have produced disturbance or debility. If the undue exercise, or the too great neglect of any one faculty, as of the attention, the memory, or the imagination, has brought on the malady, the object must be to excite or to soothe, to rouse or restrain such faculty; and if the irregularity seems dependent on some bodily inaptness or disorder, to this of course attention must be immediately given. It must be carefully inquired, whether some recent trouble, some emotion which has lately affected him, or some temporary and strong influence, may not have disturbed the mind; or whether the cause is of a nature to produce effects of a more permanent character, as where insanity arises from any organic change, the result of slow disease; or from the growing imbecility or decay of the organs by which mind is manifested, either as the effect of old age, or, as sometimes is observed, unexpectedly produced in earlier life; or whether the mental impairment has been left



by some attack of bodily illness, or is kept up by the habitual use of any kind of stimulus. The practitioner should be aware, that there are many individuals whose ordinary manner is weak and foolish, but who are yet quite equal to the management even of important concerns; and that there are others whom the slightest hurry discomposes. No one has authority to insist on immediate decision when the decision is in any degree doubtful; and if the practitioner pronounces a decision before he has really satisfied his mind, he has no right from that time forward to look upon himself as an honest man.

The result of his careful inquiries must govern the whole treatment of the case; the mere administration of medicine, to which I have only to allude, as well as the application of restraint, against the abuses of which my remarks are more particularly directed. The medical treatment must depend on the bodily state of the patient; for violence, and incoherence, and raving, may all arise, in different instances, from states of the body entirely opposite to one another, and requiring an opposite treatment. The restraint necessary is determined by the violence or folly which is present, or by the violence or folly known to be meditated.

The impairment of any one faculty of the mind will require attention, varied in each particular case; and if it has been induced by any physical

irregularity, the removal of that irregularity should be the first object of our care. Every practitioner must have seen patients thus affected, some of whom a single bleeding, followed by medicine calculated to act on the intestinal canal, has completely relieved; others, in whom the depression, produced by taking for a few days, at proper intervals, the Antimonium Tartarizatum in solution, has completely overcome a wildness and incoherency which seemed dangerous to themselves and to all about them; and others who became calm after enjoying a profound sleep, procured by medicinal means. Until the effect is produced, whatever it be, watching and restraint may be highly necessary; but the restraint can hardly in any recent case require to be permanent. Every thing of that kind must depend on the nature of the affection. One man may believe he sees figures and hears voices, and yet not require much watching; another may believe the same, and think himself commanded to kill himself, and he must be very closely watched; or a mere impairment of memory may make financial superintendence requisite; or a foolish or imbecile lunatic may have paroxysms in which he is mischievous or dangerous. The physical disorder may return, and the mental disorder be renewed, and medicine may be again necessary, and watching and restraint also. But let the restraint be applied without the medicinal means, and the



cause and its effects are continued, and the case becomes chronic. Or impose continued restraint, or even restraint too long continued, and you superadd another cause of irritation, and, perhaps, confirm the malady. It is easy to watch, and at the same time not directly to restrain.

When the patient's disorder is produced by the prevalence and dominion of any strong emotion, or other temporary mental influence, the management of all the circumstances which can affect the mind is of paramount importance, and the patient requires continual superintendence, and a judicious control as regards the indulgence of certain emotions, or as regards the encouragement of favourite but morbid impressions. The consideration of the proper means of effecting this, in each case, would comprehend the whole subject of the moral treatment of insanity, of the efficacy of which in many cases no reasonable doubt can be entertained, but the adaptation of which to any case is by nothing so much counteracted or impeded as by improper methods of restraint. It may be highly requisite that the patient should be subjected to the influence of new scenes, and strange faces, and circumstances unusual to him; but to admit this, is a very different thing from admitting that the scenes, and persons, and circumstances, brought before him in a lunatic asylum, are likely to be serviceable.

It is not very uncommon to find patients becoming more and more susceptible to all impressions, more and more irritable, in consequence of habitual indulgence in diet which disagrees with them. Certain articles of food or of drink, which produce a temporary disturbance of the whole system, are taken so frequently, that the body and mind are never left quite free from their effects. This is often remarked as respects articles of drink, but is not unfrequently the direct result of certain articles of food. A change from animal to vegetable food will, in some constitutions, remove irritability by removing excitement; in others, it will increase irritability by making the sensitive system weaker and more susceptible: some men would fall into fatuity if rigorously debarred from every kind of fluid stimulus; whilst others are not only gradually ruined in temper and feelings by frequent intoxication, but have their moral sense perverted or blunted, and the faculties of the mind permanently confused. During the early stage of the progress, restraint may in such cases be productive of a complete cure; and even when insanity has become declared, but has not long existed, it will recede and disappear if the habits which are destroying the mind are resolutely broken. In consequence of the difficulty of preventing a return to them, it is not uncommon to find persons in lunatic houses who are quite



rational, but who cannot be allowed their liberty, because, when released, they relapse into intemperate indulgences, and again become perfectly mad. The necessity of restraint in such instances is, therefore, quite evident; but it is too much forgotten that it might in many cases be effected without the confinement of the individual among mad people. The desire for intoxicating liquors is partly, I believe, in many cases, a physical disease, arising from depraved actions in the stomach and intestines, though greatly aggravated, no doubt, like any other disease connected with morbid sensation, by giving way to it: the cure depends partly upon physical and partly upon moral treatment, and both might often be better administered out of an asylum than in it. Provided a proper restraint and superintendence be instituted in cases of this description, there can be no justifiable pretext for depriving the patient of his property, or of so much of his personal liberty as is compatible with his being restrained in the single particular in which indulgence would be detrimental to himself and others. He requires long-continued superintendence, and occasional restraint; but seclusion, confinement among lunatics, deprivation of property, long separation from friends—all these things are quite unnecessary and improper.

Defective modes of education,—in which the

importance of being habituated to endure inconveniences and privations without impatience and complaint, is too much forgotten,—are productive of numerous examples, among those whose wealth or rank causes them to be flattered or feared, of persons whose susceptibility to impressions is so morbidly increased, that without any actual malady, their existence almost becomes a continued state of disease. In this valetudinary state, the slightest uneasiness must be immediately removed, every uncomfortable sensation must be diligently excluded; no circumstance must be permitted to assail them with any emotions but those of pleasure; pleasure itself must, to be borne, be half insipid. Surrounded by those who watch every look, and listen to every expression of morbid suffering, the mind and body become at length pampered into real disorder; and both are rendered unfit for the endurance of ordinary life. In this unhappy condition, some sensation assumes an ascendancy, or some emotion, which no diligence has been able to shut out, overpowers the understanding; or the love of being obeyed, and of having every wish gratified, is aggravated into such imperious selfishness as cannot any longer be endured. When the physician is consulted concerning such a patient, he can prescribe means of allaying morbid sensation, and of soothing excessive irritability; but the habit of self-



indulgence is too powerful for medicine to relieve. The patient must be removed from those who are timid and accustomed to submission, and must be placed with those whose judicious kindness will not degenerate into absolute subserviency: certain efforts of self-exertion must be positively enjoined, and a habit of self-denial by degrees be established, and opposed to the old habits. The same principles must govern the bodily as well as the mental treatment, and a complete regulation of the diet and regimen of the patient made a condition of undertaking the cure.——Now, let the medical man pause in such cases, before he prescribes confinement among other lunatics; a prescription which, however convenient a way it may seem of obtaining some of the desired advantages, is quite inconsistent with others that have been named as necessary. Removal from home, a change of servants, new occupation for the thoughts, regular hours, proper exercise in the open air, well ordered diet, quiet nights, and days well but not laboriously employed, in the society of well-educated companions;—these, with common attention to the bodily functions, will, in almost every case, restore the patient to health and rational feelings.

Perhaps the patient about whom we are consulted may be singularly weak and credulous, or he may be slow and inexpert in commanding

his attention, or in exercising his memory ; or he may be much occupied with some pursuit of which none but himself can see the value ; or he may be one of those vain and weak persons who cannot adhere to the truth in common conversation ; or he may indulge in eccentricities concerning diet or dress ; and his folly may be brought prominently forth at the interview, so as to exhibit him to a stranger in the most ridiculous point of view imaginable. Yet the same man may take care of his property, and may cherish no desire to hurt any one ; or perhaps the very steadiness with which he opposes the selfish and designing views of those about him, may be the motive which impels them to represent him as a madman. Such a man possesses an infirm mind, and no medicine can strengthen it ; but let the practitioner ask himself, Why the man is to be deprived of his money and of his freedom ? To threaten any man with such deprivation is likely enough to exasperate him ; but to threaten a timid, nervous, inconsistent, credulous man, with horrors against which he can conceive no probable means of defence, is to take the surest method of making him frantic.

A man may be reduced, by excessive mental exertion, or by protracted dissipation, to such a condition that the slightest mental effort, an attempt to confine the attention for even a short



time to one subject, may produce irritability, or exhaustion. Yet such a man, acting in a great measure from habit, and guided by judgments long since formed, may commit no kind of folly or extravagance, and in no respect deserve the name or the treatment of a lunatic. He may be as helpless, and as little able to guide or govern himself, as a child, except in those ordinary circumstances which are commonly regulated, almost wholly, by habit; and he may not be able to take care of his money. No great share of discrimination is required to see, that in such a case, a certain degree of watching and care is necessary, and that there must be restraint over property; but, at the same time, that any restraint on the liberty of the individual, beyond what his safety demands, would be an imposition quite insufferable. The case calls for medical skill. Restore the healthy condition of the brain and nerves, and the mind can then, by its regenerated instruments, once more manifest itself.

Discouragement is often thrown on *mental* treatment by injudicious attempts to act on the faculties of the mind in these cases of weakened organization. Such attempts cannot be made with success before the bodily state is improved, and, if the bodily state cannot be improved, such attempts can never succeed at all. The power must be in some degree restored before we can reasonably

call for action. When some degree of power *is* restored, by good air, careful diet, tonic medicines, the shower-bath, sea-bathing, and attention to every article of regimen, then we may begin to exercise the faculties a little; but this must be done with the most extreme caution and tenderness. It is quite in vain to attempt to do it on any rigid and formal system. It may be practicable to day, and impracticable to-morrow. Times, and opportunities, and occasions of returning strength, must be watched for, and profited by, but not too zealously or vehemently. To establish this system of treatment and watching is the duty of the practitioner; and he *may* establish it, if he does not send off the patient to a place in which such a system cannot be pursued. Whether it is immediately practicable to endeavour to rouse the mind, or some preliminary attention is required before such an endeavour is practicable, or whether, as will very often be the case, it is desirable to abstain from direct attempts to influence the mind, and necessary to divert it, in its weakened state, like the mind of a child, to objects unconnected with the morbid ideas;—in all or any of these cases, the patient requires that degree of care, and watching, and that medical and mental management which, difficult in any circumstances, are impossible in a house full of lunatics.

In all cases in which mental treatment is imme-



diately practicable, I presume it will be found to consist of attempts to rouse such mental actions as, if efficiently performed, would be inconsistent with the continuance of the particular form of insanity. It is obvious, after what has been said, that such attempts must, according to my views of insanity, be directed towards that salutary excitement of the suffering faculty or faculties which may once more permit of the comparison of circumstances connected either with the delusion, or with the general irrationality, that may in any case prevail. There have been many instances in which the escape from a delusion has been effected in this manner, and in a way to show how the process was effected. The escape must be more difficult, and must require a longer time for being effected, in cases of general irrationality; and the return to healthy comparison and sound judgment being more gradually performed, the process will be much less striking. In a former chapter, allusion was made to a case related by Dr. Darwin, in which a man who had become persuaded, without real cause, that he was insolvent, was cured of his delusion by the diligent perusal of a correct list of "debtor and creditor." Now and then an absurd delusion has been banished by ludicrous devices, as in the example of a gentleman the situation of whose lodgings, being opposite to the house of an industrious cobbler, had so led him to

the habitual contemplation of his neighbour, as to make him seriously alarmed by the cobbler's unusual absence from his stall, and to believe that he had himself actually swallowed him in his working dress; in this case, we are told, the action of a violent emetic, and the sudden appearance of the cobbler on the floor, and his affected rapidity of escape, completely put an end to the hypochondriacal fancies of the patient. It is not very uncommon for patients to believe they have swallowed live eels, or frogs, or toads, and perhaps in such cases expedients of the kind now mentioned may be resorted to. But they will not always succeed: their success will only ensue when the patient's mind is in a state to make a just comparison of the effect apparently produced with his previous belief. We have seen that maniacs can believe in two things quite inconsistent with each other; and, even when the device succeeds, it is to be remembered that it leaves the patient still more confirmed in the belief that his delusion was a reality, and consequently more open to the encouragement of some new imagination.

No objection, however, can be made to timely attempts to excite the just comparison of delusions with real circumstances. The attempts may fail many times, and succeed at last. A mental faculty, long weakened, unexpectedly acquires sufficient strength for healthy action, in the same way as we



sometimes observe in invalids an unexpected return of appetite for food, or of power to get up and be dressed. The attention, long inactive, is all at once sufficiently exerted to convey a true and distinct idea to the mind, in such a way as to lead to its being compared with one which is imaginary. Such favorable intervals may be rare, but they are not on that account to be neglected; rather, being so rare, they should never be allowed to pass unimproved.

An affecting instance of the power of a timely appeal to the reason occurs in the life of Cowper, whose great genius, it is well known, was too often overshadowed with religious despondency. In the account he gives of a conversation he had with his brother, who visited him at Dr. Cotton's, he says—"as soon as we were left alone, my brother asked me how I found myself. I answered, 'as much better as despair can make me.' We went together into the garden. Here, on my expressing a settled assurance of sudden judgment, he protested to me that it was all a delusion, and protested so strongly, that I could not help giving some attention to him. I burst into tears, and cried out, 'If it be a delusion, then I am one of the happiest of beings!' Something like a ray of hope was shot into my heart, but still I was afraid to indulge it." After this conversation, he began to recover.

Most of my readers may have read the remarkable example, related by Dr. Gooch, of good effects arising from the materials for comparison being directly offered to the patient's mind. A lady, affected with melancholia after her lying-in, began, after a long struggle between sanity and insanity, to believe that she had been guilty of crimes for which she was to be publicly executed, that her infamy had occasioned the death of her husband, and that his spirit haunted her. It was her custom, every evening, to fix herself at the window, and to gaze on a white post which seemed to her to be the ghost of her husband. Several weeks having passed without change or amendment, her husband thought it would be better that he should see her ; for although he had been told that her removal from home was essential to her recovery, he reasonably imagined that the best way of proving himself to be alive was to show himself. He was told, that even if he did show himself, his wife might persist in believing him to be a ghost ; but he was obstinate, and the medical attendants gave way to him. The effect, as afterwards stated by the husband, was very striking. " As soon as I entered the drawing room, where she usually spent the day, she ran into a corner, hid her face in her handkerchief, then turned round, looked me in the face, one moment appearing delighted that I was



alive, but immediately afterwards assumed a hideous expression of countenance, and screamed out that I was dead and come to haunt her. This was exactly what Dr. ——— had anticipated, and for some minutes I thought all was lost.

“ Finding that persuasion and argument only irritated and confirmed her in her belief, I desisted, and tried to draw off her attention to other subjects; it was some time since she had either seen me or the children; I put her arm under mine, took her into the garden, and began to relate what had occurred to me and them since we parted; this excited her attention, she soon became interested, and I entered with the utmost minuteness and circumstantiality into the affairs of the nursery, her home, and her friends. I now felt that I was gaining ground, and when I thought I had complete possession of her mind, I ventured to ask her in a joking manner, whether I was not very communicative for a ghost; she laughed; I immediately drew her from the subject, and again engaged her attention with her children and friends. The plan succeeded beyond my hope; I dined, spent the evening with her, and left her at night perfectly herself again.”

This happy result was permanent; and whatever general objections may be made to such trials, it is impossible not to be deeply impressed with the fact that they sometimes succeed; and it is well

worthy of medical practitioners to consider what reply can be given to the questions which Dr. Gooch has addressed to them, in relation to the case just cited—"How long would this patient have remained in a disordered state of mind, if she had not been treated in this way?" and again, "How many persons are there in a similar state, who (although those who have the care of them do not suspect it,) are capable of being restored in a similar way to their natural views and feelings?"

If the number of cases is not great in which such signal benefit would follow as in the instances now mentioned, the proportion of cases in which, if no attempt of which the cases admitted was neglected, some amelioration would be produced, would, I have no doubt, be very considerable indeed. No man can have attended a single case of insanity without finding out, that the patient very much adapts his conversation to the visible credulity or indulgence of his hearers: he will talk wildly and foolishly to his attendant, and quietly to the medical practitioner. The tone in which he is addressed influences the manner in which he replies; and except in cases of great imbecility of mind, or cases in which we have to deal with a furious maniac, we never fail to perceive that this kind of control is practicable to a certain extent. If a lunatic even begins to talk incoherently to a person who has discouraged his



incoherent conversation, he will sometimes check himself, and observe, that he must not talk in that manner to the person whom he is then addressing. More is gained, generally speaking, by averting the thoughts of the patient from his mad subject, than by the best devised conversation; and it is sometimes advantageous to require a clear and distinct utterance, and almost always important to forbid any violent declamation on subjects which have been observed to give a special irritation to the patient. The keepers of lunatics, for the most part, err exceedingly in the last particular; and, seeming to think it incumbent upon them to give every visiter a specimen of the insanity of every patient, they often rouse the violence of each by mentioning particular subjects, much in the same way that a keeper of wild beasts stirs up his drowsy animals with a pole. The habit of using violent expressions and gesticulations should, on the contrary, as much as possible be broken, and the keepers should be forbidden to mention any subject likely to excite either.

So many hypochondriacal persons are known to be at large, who entertain strange opinions concerning their own form and nature, that it seems hardly necessary to caution the practitioner against treating such patients as madmen are commonly treated. That the mind of these individuals is

impaired, is unquestionable ; but the character of the impairment is not dangerous. Yet, when there is much anxiety to get rid of a troublesome member of a family, very great stress is laid on these fancies, to which, taken by themselves, the practitioner must not attach great importance. The same caution will suffice as regards cases of singular absence of mind, which may be united, as it was in the case of Dr. Adam Smith, with mental faculties of the highest rank. Eccentricities of various kinds are often the mere result of circumstance, and are rather permitted to creep over the character of a man of sound mind, than really indicative of the growth of mental disorder.

A naval officer, who held a lucrative and responsible situation, was much attached to making telescopic observations, and imagined that he had made remarkable discoveries in the sun. Among other strange assertions, he solemnly declared that at the time of the abdication of Napoleon, in 1814, he saw the Emperor's figure in the sun ; and that the next day the figure appeared again, but reduced to a skeleton. On the third day the figure was no longer visible, but the united colours of the allies were very distinctly seen. A minute of these appearances was regularly entered in the log-book, and it is said that several of the crew of the ship were ready to testify to the perfect accuracy of the captain's observations. In the



face, however, of such evidence, few persons were found who believed a word of it, and the gallant officer had the mortification to find that this was considered to be only one of his delusions. That it was a mere delusion, there can indeed be no kind of doubt; but the delusion, and all the other delusions cherished by the same individual, were perfectly harmless; they did not affect the operations of his mind in the common business of his life, or in any way disqualify him for his official duties.

A gentleman, of considerable possessions, became unaccountably and invincibly possessed with the idea that the Queen of England (Queen Charlotte) was in love with him, and had given him to understand the favorable nature of her sentiments towards him. Although conducting himself very well in most of the offices of life, the frequent recurrence and assertion of this preposterous notion were considered such convincing proofs of his being a madman, that his family applied for a Commission of Lunacy, in order that his affairs might be placed in safer hands. The Lord Chancellor of that time dined with the gentleman in question, with a party of friends, and both during and after the dinner, the lunatic gentleman was so polite, agreeable, and amusing, as to contribute in a very remarkable degree to the enjoyment of the day. At last, when the conversation had

been continued long enough to afford a fair trial of the state of the gentleman's mind, the Lord Chancellor was so agreeably affected by what had passed, that he could not help expressing to the host the great gratification he had derived from his introduction to him; and added, how utterly absurd it now appeared to him to have given credit to a report that he was crazy enough to believe the Queen was in love with him—"Well, my lord," replied the gentleman with much gravity, "and is there any thing so very extraordinary in the circumstance?—is it impossible for a woman of her high rank to fall in love with a man of an inferior one? and am I to be considered crazy for giving credit to her most ample and repeated avowal of that being the case." This was of course sufficient to satisfy the Chancellor; and the commission was granted. The sequel was no less remarkable, for the lunatic gentleman gave so much assistance to those entrusted with the management of his affairs, that he was the means of their getting over difficulties which without his aid would have been insurmountable; and in the end I believe he was actually, if not formally, constituted the steward of his own estate. No great mischief seems to have been done in this instance; but the principle acted upon is perfectly frightful, and opposed in every respect to that which I have endeavoured to impress on the prac-



tioner's mind: for if we begin to punish the groundless notions of visionary men, where are we to stop? and if this can be done wherever there is property to be seized, the injustice arising out of it must be monstrous.

If such cases as that just referred to had been viewed in a proper light, much ingenuity might have been spared in public investigations, in which sometimes a foolish expression, and sometimes a smart reply, have been decisive of the fate of an individual with whom no one had the smallest right to interfere. Medical men are, even now, too much accustomed to consider a pertinent answer from a lunatic as a proof that he is in his senses, and to forget that a foolish one may be made by many who cannot be considered to have lost them; that a sound mind may be of feeble power; that in an insane mind there may be *no* one prominent delusion, and that a man of strong mind *may* have one cherished delusion, which does not incapacitate him from reasonable actions, or endanger the peace of any human being; that a man may, in short, be mad, like Hamlet, "North North East," and yet not disqualified from the performance of any social duty; that men of great intellectual power may be singularly careless and defective in some of the common parts of life; and others, of very defective capacity, shrewd

enough in whatever relates to themselves and their money.

I was acquainted with an ingenious gentleman, whose favourite theory it was, that the intellect was merely so much caloric, the excess or defect of which constituted the differences observable between man and man. I know at this time more than one individual who has implicit faith in all the absurdities of animal magnetism. Dr. Gooch speaks of an individual who thinks there is a current of water through the world, from pole to pole, and meditates its navigation. None of these fancies, arising, as they all do, from some imperfection in the mind, necessarily incapacitate a man from acting rationally, at least in all important affairs. All these people have a favourite whim, or cherish some delusive impression, which gives a little occasional oddity to their conduct, and nothing more. Such a character is sketched with his characteristic delicacy, by Addison, in the account of Sir Roger de Coverley, which, if untouched by Steele, who does not seem to have understood it, would have been perfect.

Dr. Haslam has related a singular case, at great length, without appearing, during the whole of the narration, once to have thought of the only question with which a medical adviser had any thing to do. The case is that of a Mr. Matthews,



who, it seems, considered himself to be the especial object of annoyance from a mysterious gang, residing in some unknown apartment near London Wall, who, by their skill in pneumatic chemistry, were enabled to inflict upon him various kinds of torture; of which kinds of torture, and of the persons inflicting it, he would give a very minute account. Sometimes they constricted the fibres of his tongue; sometimes they spread a veil beneath his brain, and intercepted communication between the mind and the heart: they would afflict him with stone in the bladder, introduce ideas at will to float and undulate in his brain, compress him almost to death by magnetic atmosphere, excoriate his stomach, force fluids into his head, lengthen the brain, and produce distortion of all images and thoughts; and now and then they distended his nerves with gas. All these, and other sufferings, sufficiently indicative of disordered sensations having assumed the force of realities, and so having disordered this poor man's understanding, were really little to the purpose for which Dr. Haslam appears to have related them. What, in fact, was there in all this to warrant confinement in a lunatic asylum? No danger to others, or to the patient himself; no danger to his property or that of others; no suspicion of meditated violence. It seems indeed highly probable, that the patient indulged in these descriptions chiefly before those who sought to

have them fully detailed; and that he enjoyed that perverse pleasure of exaggerating which has been mentioned among the infirmities of the mind. This opinion is strengthened by the circumstance, that the patient was seen by two highly respectable physicians, and that they seem to have heard nothing of the pneumatic chemists. But the important point is, that, admitting the patient to have had implicit faith in his delusions, and to have stated them without exaggeration, there was nothing to show the danger of allowing the individual to be at large. Superintendence and watching might have been advisable, medicine might have been necessary, but confinement in a mad-house was unjustifiable.

In such a case as that of Mr. Matthews, I can see no more justification of great restraint than in the celebrated case of the Reverend Simon Browne, who for many years before his death entertained a conviction that "he had lost his rational soul," although during that time he evinced great ability both in his ordinary conversation, and in his writings. He was a man of exemplary life, but, being observed by his friends to have left off joining either in public or private worship, he explained to them that "he had fallen under the sensible displeasure of God, who had caused his rational soul gradually to perish, and left him only an animal life in common with brutes; that it was therefore profane in him to pray, and incongruous



to be present at the prayers of others." From this melancholy view of his own state, nothing could avert him. Even when he dedicated a book of a controversial character to the Queen, a work spoken of very highly by his cotemporaries, he speaks of it in the dedication as the work of one who "was once a man; and of some little name; but of no worth, as his present unparalleled case makes but too manifest; for by the immediate hand of an avenging God, his very thinking substance has for more than seventeen years been wasting away, till it is wholly perished out of him, if it be not utterly come to nothing."\* Here was a false impression, a visible defect in the comparing powers, an undoubted madness; but only afflicting to himself, and dangerous to no one. He was therefore not confined, or restrained; but his delusion was as complete as that of Mr. Matthews, and his being at large not less dangerous,—that is, as far as the narration goes, there was no apparent danger in either case.

Men must not, then, it is quite clear, be confined for entertaining peculiar opinions on particular subjects; or, if they are, it is clear that no rule can be found by which any one can be guided on the one hand, or protected on the other. A man

\* A full account of this remarkable case will be found in the Gentleman's Magazine, 1762.

may even be accounted mad for believing that there are two worlds of created intelligences connected with our planet, one invisible, the other the visible; that there is no such thing as solitude; that every lonely place is peopled, and every solitary action done before many witnesses: yet he would not assert more in avowing this belief, than religion has taught many to believe. If he goes a step farther, and imagines that he can communicate with these invisible beings, he will certainly run great risk of being looked upon as a dangerous madman, although some great men have cherished the same belief: he is then, in fact, under the dominion of fancy, has allowed an imagination to take the authority of an impression made on the senses, believes without comparing and judging; and is on that point insane. Yet no one has a right to interfere with him.

It would not be difficult to collect, from history, remarkable examples of delusions entertained by persons who were not thereby prevented from the performance of great actions; or rather, we should find many examples of great performance originating in some delusion. Passing over many which will probably occur to the reader, the history of the middle ages presents us with an example so deeply interesting in all its circumstances, that no one possessed of natural feelings, who has once perused the recital, can be unmoved by an



allusion to it: I mean that of Joan of Arc. The daughter of humble labouring people, and without any education, this singular child had been accustomed to feed her active fancy, from an early age, with the traditional legends of a province celebrated in the annals of romance and of religion. Distinguished only by her pious demeanour, and by occasional indications of an ardent mind, she treasured up in her thoughts whatever could nourish the lofty aspirations which were subsequently to be declared, until the inward emotions seem to have made her the subject of sensorial illusions; and the figures of saints appeared to her, and held high discourse with her concerning the state of France, then distracted by civil wars, and concerning her own destiny, as an agent for the salvation of her country. Undismayed by discouragements, or ridicule, or by difficulties which nothing but enthusiasm could have surmounted, she persevered in her intentions, until all who came within her sphere partook of the exalted hope by which she was animated. Throughout the whole of her extraordinary adventures, at the court, in the camp, and in prison, she continued to believe in the supernatural revelations of God's will to her; and yet this undoubted derangement of mind was compatible with the possession of great military talent, greatly quickened and improved by the hard service in which it was her lot to be so actively engaged.

Every now and then we see the excitement of the enthusiast yielding to the fears of the woman, and showing the character of her malady so strongly as to increase our interest in the individual, and our pity for the sufferings and indignities heaped upon so young and so innocent a creature.\*

The annals of literature afford other examples : one, very much in point, presents itself in the instance of Glanvil, who wrote concerning witches and apparitions. He repeatedly acknowledges his belief in the existence of various orders of good and evil spirits ; in the lower ones partaking of human propensities, delighting in mischief, being capable of attachments, gifted with some degree of foresight, and so fond of gossiping, as to inform particular mortals of approaching evil. He considers scepticism as to the existence of witches and witchcraft as akin to disbelief of the existence of God ;—yet Glanvil was never accounted mad ; but lived and died in much esteem, as Chaplain to the King, and a Fellow of the Royal Society. His whole book consists of able reasoning, in very excellent language, on false premises, the very definition of madness, according to some authorities ;

\* History of England, by Sharon Turner, Vol. III. She was but nineteen years of age when she was burnt at Rouen. Her execution was preceded and accompanied by circumstances indicative of such unmanly and brutal exultation as has seldom been exhibited, except in religious warfare.



and yet, when we read his book, we never for one moment fancy him mad. What would have been the consequence of his being examined in a court of law on a *charge* of madness, and put upon the subject of witches and apparitions, in the reign of Charles, it is not easy to say ; but he would be in some danger of imprisonment and deprivation of property in the present day.

Harrington, the author of the *Oceana*, cherished a notion that his animal spirits transpired from him in the shape of birds, or flies, or bees ; much of his conversation turned on good and evil spirits ; and he would use strong arguments to prove that his sensorial illusions were realities : but on other subjects he was clear and rational. The practitioner need surely not be much concerned about such cases. The subjects are insane, and he may try to cure them of what is probably produced by bodily disorder ; but there must be some indication of incapacity to take care of property, or to guard against danger, or to avoid dangerous indiscretions, before the medical man's thoughts must be allowed to turn towards the subject of restraint. A man may have these and other very strange whims, and yet, like the citizen of Argos, be a good neighbour, a good husband, hospitable, and able to govern his household. To advocate these opinions seems very much like advocating truisms, but most of the books which are in the hands of the profession

abound with directions how to *detect* these delusions; and it is pitiable to see what persecution many unfortunate patients have undergone, in their natural desire to conceal what they could well enough perceive was to be turned to their serious disadvantage.

A man may be speculative in his ideas, visionary, fickle, and yet not a proper object of interdiction, or for the appointment of guardians to restrain his conduct. A fondness for speculation is doubtless a cause of ruin in many instances; but all speculation is gaming, and gaming may be attended with gain as well as loss, so that it is difficult to conceive any interference, before the event, which would be consistent with that degree of personal liberty which ought not to be infringed upon. It is an evil, but an evil that must be submitted to, because if we attempt to counteract it, we incur evils which are greater. The tribunal of La Seine refused an interdiction in the case of a celebrated pleader (Selves), although he was a "meddler in his family, litigious in society, impertinent towards the magistrates, vainly profuse in his expenditure, and subject to some illusions;" and I differ from M. Georget, who thinks that respect for liberty was, in this refusal, carried too far. The consequence of an opposite decision would have been numerous applications of a similar nature. Every impatient son, every selfish relative, might have turned it to



his advantage; every eccentricity would have been represented as madness; and no man who ever ventured to be original in trifles would have been safe. The evils incurred by the interference would therefore have been immeasurably greater than any evil which could be occasioned by eccentricity.

The impression which has caused the insanity may be no delusion: a man may have become the object of the malignity, or jealousy, or relentless persecution of those who once professed to be his friends; or a husband or a wife may deplore the real infidelity of a partner; or a man, passed the middle point of life, and habituated to reflect on the manner in which the hopes and friends of his youth had disappeared, how many bitter recollections the active part of life had left him, how soon the time would come when he would sleep "in the dust of death," and what uncertainty must hang over the prospects of another world, may have fallen into melancholy habits of thought, without any delusion, or any great folly or unreasonableness. The impressions derived from such circumstances or reflections has penetrated too deeply, and has effected the mind unduly, or more than it reasonably ought; but the impression may be derived from real circumstances, and from reflections only in the slightest possible degree incorrect. A judicious friend, viewing the circumstances dispassionately, might remind the patient

that the malignity of those who were once professed friends, ought to prevent any regret for the loss of their wonted attentions ; and that it was a matter of congratulation for any man to be freed from heartless and false associates : or he might endeavour to console the wronged husband or wife, by suggesting the inutility of long continued grief for what could not be remedied, and what belonged too much to the infirmity of human nature : or he might remind the man who laboured under the gloom arising from the contemplation at once of the emptiness and of the end of life, that the one was a kind of counterpoise to the other, and that the rapid flight and approaching termination of our years should prevent all immoderate disappointment or pain, arising out of the events by which they were chequered ; whilst, as regarded the uncertainty of our future life, we had still reason to depend on the same benevolent power by which all things were governed that in our present state were made sensible to us. These and many other means of relieving the mind might be tried with great propriety ; but to persist in treating every idea which we ourselves do not entertain, as a delusion in another mind, in which the idea has a legitimate existence ; to heap contradiction and restraint on the patient ; to shut him up with mad people ; is a conduct which would be perfectly inconceivable if it had not really been



practised, and practised so often, and with so little consciousness of its being wrong, that it is absolutely necessary to warn the practitioner that this is one of the things which he must not do, and must not permit to be done.

It is the disposition, or the propensity, arising out of the impression that has been made, whether the impression is delusive or real, that must determine the interference. French medical authorities tell us, that the ladies of their country sometimes commit suicide because they have survived their beauty. This may be no delusion, for age is a great destroyer of beauty; but the disposition arising from the impression of what is actually true, is not of a nature to be trusted to philosophical discourse, or treated by the common topics of consolation: it is *dangerous* to the person, and *therefore*, in such a case, the patient must be vigilantly watched, or even closely restrained.

When the brain seems to have undergone, or to be undergoing changes, incapacitating it for the perfect manifestation of the intellect, the indications are simple. Medical aid can but act by agents which restore or preserve the corporeal functions, and which may renew the vigour of corporeal organs, or repair their structure when it has suffered damage; and if this cannot be always done with respect to the brain in persons in the prime of

life, who sink unexpectedly into a mental as well as bodily atrophy, it is still less often practicable when the defect arises from old age. If the impairment is the result of recent illness, a fever, or a paralytic attack, the practitioner will find that the restoration of the bodily health is commonly attended with the restoration of mental power. In the mean time, that care must be extended to the property and person, which the peculiar features of the case require. Patients of this description are liable to temporary excitement, sometimes merely bringing them up to a sound state of sensation and activity, but sometimes irregularly passing beyond it, and making close restraint for a short time necessary. This circumstance, and the inconvenience these helpless patients occasion, causes many of them to be sent to lunatic houses, in which they are generally exposed to the needless misery of feeling that they are treated like mad persons. Under certain regulations, and if protected from the society of lunatics, they would certainly not suffer much from seclusion except when the mental debility has been produced by disease, and is of a nature to be recovered from.

It may perhaps appear altogether superfluous to make any observations on the supposition that temporary mania, from acute disorder of the brain, or from its disturbance by any existing acute disorder of any other organ, may be pronounced



likely to be benefited by the ordinary directions given in cases of madness. Nor indeed can I imagine that any one who has paid common attention to disease, can fail to perceive in such cases, that the disorder of the mind is the direct effect of bodily disease, which disease is to be relieved in the usual way. But a state of the system is left after certain fevers, in which the mind is weak, irritable, or even so far disturbed, as to prevent those exertions which are distinctive of sound mind. This may be the effect of some change which the disordered actions of fever have produced in the brain or its membranes ; an alteration in the tone of the blood vessels, or in the consistence of the nervous mass, or in the thickness of its membranous envelopes. Or it may be the effect of a modification of the susceptibility of the brain to impressions, an increase or a decrease of its sensibility, without palpable change of structure, or of the apparatus of circulation. All these cases afford hope of eventual recovery, those perhaps excepted in which the consistence of the membranes, or of the nervous mass itself, is altered ; and even that alteration may, in the continual mutations and renewal which the body is undergoing, give place to a renewal of healthy structure. The whole cure depends upon careful protection being afforded to the mind until the bodily actions again become healthy. As the health improves,

the blood will become more equally distributed; the cerebral vessels will recover their tone; the brain will become duly instead of morbidly susceptible; even the structure of the brain or membranes may be rectified and repaired; and the mind will recover strength almost as soon as the body does. All this may be done, provided that, all the time, the weak, and susceptible, and irritable mind be protected from injurious impressions. The air of the country, tranquillity, proper diet, quiet nights, the exclusion of every mental impression that is not of an indifferent, or, at the utmost, of a pleasing and gentle kind, will in a few weeks restore the body; and the mind will not be long without recovering its powers. To any one who knows what a Lunatic asylum must unavoidably be, and the privations it must necessarily induce, it is certainly quite superfluous to say, that if a medical man permits a patient in these circumstances to be taken into confinement, he does all that depends upon him to prevent a cure, and to make the patient a madman or an idiot for the remainder of his life.

It is well known to medical men, that women are liable to temporary insanity after confinement. It would seem as if they had been subjected to every kind of unskilful treatment that could arise from narrow views of the nature of this disorder. Its symptoms are not different from the common



symptoms of mania. The patient is restless, irritable, loquacious, and becomes unable to exercise her attention or memory ; or experiences emotions of unhappiness without any external cause, or is the subject of false sensations : in some cases the mind is affected with melancholy, in others, excited. Other indications of nervous affection may accompany it, as they do the common forms of mania, and that which is left on the subsidence of fever. Dr. Gooch says, that he has known it strikingly resemble the disorder called *Delirium Tremens*, in which great mental irritation is accompanied with tremblings, and with imperfect muscular actions ; and in a case which he relates, it assumed another form, and was accompanied in a part of its progress by catalepsy.\* The most dangerous cases seem to be attended with fever, and a rapid pulse, and such cases probably depend on inflammation ; but those which have a less dangerous tendency, and are not attended with these symptoms, will run on for some weeks, or even for some months. In some cases the mind suffers permanent injury, or at least is never restored to the healthy performance of its functions : this is particularly likely to be the result when the patient has been at any time insane before pregnancy, or where she inherits a predisposition to the malady. In a great majority of cases

\* Account of some of the most important Diseases peculiar to Women, by Robert Gooch, M.D. p. 116.

of all kinds, however, the patients recover: and it happens, perhaps in the greater number of these, that no mental affection supervenes on future lyings-in. This form of mental affection may originate in two very different states of the brain. The excitement may depend on determination of blood to the head, or actual inflammation of the brain, indicated by accompanying, or rather by preceding headach, vertigo, flushed face, and noise in the ears; or it may depend on inflammation of the uterus or peritoneum, indicated by their proper symptoms. But it seems far more commonly to come on without these, and to be the result of debility, producing in a nervous system, so disposed by the circumstances of the puerperal state, a morbid susceptibility to every impression, either of sense, or of memory and imagination. It is the opinion of authors of great credit, that this diversity of character in the malady has often been overlooked, and the active practice necessary in the first variety, applied to the second, which requires an entirely opposite treatment; and bleeding resorted to instead of opiates or cordials, with attention to the state of the intestinal canal. Against this mistake, however, the practitioner has been sufficiently warned, by the instructive cases and observations published by the lamented physician to whose work I have just alluded. There is another mistake which will perhaps not be so



readily acknowledged ; for I well know that patients, labouring under puerperal insanity, have sometimes been sent to Lunatic asylums. Such a step, in such circumstances, is so inconsistent with every feeling prevailing in social life, that whenever it is taken, the whole responsibility and the whole odium of it must rest with the medical adviser. Yet what advice can be worse than that which is not adapted to any possible case. If the disorder arises from inflammation, the patient ought on no account to be moved out of her bed ; and if it depends on that peculiar combination of debility with that state of the nervous system which is well known to exist in the puerperal state,—if the mental disorder, in short, is the result of increased susceptibility, what can be more barbarous than to subject the morbidly susceptible system to new and painful impressions. If, also, the disorder seldom prove incurable ; if it is but of some weeks' or some months' duration, even in the worst of the cases which are generally met with ; and may probably never recur ; surely the practitioner should not run the risk of presenting such images to the patient, during the period of her illness, as may prolong the malady, afflict her on her restoration to health, and dispose her to a recurrence of insanity at every subsequent confinement. I trust such things have been done but seldom ; and, when they have been done, I doubt not that they have arisen from that want of

acquaintance with the character of mental disorders which I have so often spoken of, and which ought certainly to be removed. Practitioners are misled by repeating, one after another, as an invariable axiom, that mad people never get well at home: but the woman who has become insane after lying-in is much more likely to get well at home than abroad. To separate her from her infant and her family, and to place her among strangers, is to debar her from almost every hope of being soothed and calmed, and there is no kind of treatment which is not perfectly practicable in her own house. If the disorder continues long, if home and its associations are evidently sources of irritation, *then* a change of place and of faces may be advisable; but not to a Lunatic asylum. In these cases, and in all cases of temporary insanity, we must watch for the dawn of convalescence; more welcome to those interested in the recovery,—the husband and the children,—than the dawn of morning to those who watch in long and stormy nights; and the utmost skill and caution must be exerted to heighten this advancing light of reason, until the shadows of madness have completely fled. To superintend with care, and without offending; to control without severity, and to indulge without weakness; to attract, without fatiguing, the attention; to revive the memory, without reviving memorials of affliction; to touch the imagination, but not too



sensibly ; to encourage, at favourable moments, to such comparison as may triumph over retreating delusions ; is a task too delicate—I might say, too sacred,—to be entrusted to common hands ; to strangers,—perhaps to mercenary strangers, or indeed to any but those who, like the husband and the family attendant, know the character, the feelings, and even the history of the patient. It is a difficult task in any hands ; the relatives of the patient may want the necessary knowledge, or necessary fortitude for it, and it may be requisite to place about her those who are acquainted with the management of the insane. Such persons, who are commonly of the better order of servants, should, however, be themselves strictly superintended ; and they will generally, I believe, be more careful in a house in which the relatives of the patient know what is going on, than in establishments for the insane, in which, by the reliance of those at the head of the house on the persons they employ, the servants commonly become self-willed and conceited, and not always free from a suspicion of occasionally practising more severity than is required. The care of lunatics is very much like the care of children, and those about them do their duty best, when the eyes of their superiors are not too long averted from their movements.

In all these cases, and in all other cases of insanity, the question of restraint, of the kind, and of the degree of restraint, still presents itself to us at every turn. Whilst other indications are too much neglected, this is generally too much assumed. I here use the word restraint, with reference both to the person and to the management of affairs. In no case can restraint, in either of these respects, be justified, except by probable danger to the person of the patient, or to others, or to his property, or to the property of others. It can never be justifiable when the patient is capable of enjoying his liberty, and when that liberty does not endanger his property, his person, or the persons or property of others. But vigilant superintendence may be absolutely necessary; and in no cases should it be neglected, when once a practitioner has been called in, until all *doubt* is completely at an end. The neglect of this rule is highly dangerous; but watching, as I have before observed, may be without restraint, the latter being added when watching proves it to be necessary.

Let the practitioner look back upon those varieties of mind which have been mentioned in the preceding pages, which constitute but a few out of many that exist. If an insane man believes that he has communications with angels, or is an emperor or a general, his happiness may be very



harmless ; he may require no restraint. But in the angelic revelations made to him, he may be ordered to kill his children ; or in his capacity of emperor or general, he may put his supposed subjects or soldiers to death. The disposition to do this may arise suddenly, and nothing but watching or superintendence can lead to a discovery of it. Yet to restrain this poor man, at all times, from walking about the fields, or partaking of any of the common enjoyments of society of which he is capable, because such a thing may happen, is not to be justified. Unless he is known to be mischievous, it is unnecessary and cruel. A man must not be made a prisoner for life because he chooses to wear a coat the wrong side outwards, or a painted hat. It may be more necessary to protect him from others, than others from him ; and therefore an asylum may be to him what its name imports—a sanctuary, and a refuge ; but unless he is disposed to injure others or himself, he must not be subjected to severe restraint. If he has property, and can take care of it, no one ought to touch that property on account of his peculiar dress ; if he has none, and can earn his livelihood, no one should interfere with him, except to protect him from the persecutions of others.

From the too great readiness to inflict the penalties of insanity on these aberrations from

sound intellect, an opposite error has arisen ; and persons whose delusion induces thoughts and actions ruinous or dangerous, are often allowed to go on in their course without the restraint which, in their case, is clearly necessary. The medical man must be as resolute in enforcing restraint in these cases, as in resisting its imposition in others. The patient may be liable to fits of extravagance or of violence, and have intervals of calmness and reason. Between the neglect of such persons in both states, and restraint in both states, there is a medium, which seems seldom to obtain practical consideration. A patient is either not restrained at all, when he has an insane fit, because it is known that he will, by and bye, be reasonable again ; or he is never set at liberty, because he is not likely to continue free from a return of his malady. The French law treats such persons as if they were always lunatic, and common practice does the same in many countries. The practitioner must act in such cases without regard to common opinion ; for it is absolutely necessary to restrain the individual when his mind is disordered ; and it is in the same degree just, that when he is convalescent, his liberty should be restored, and superintendence substituted for restraint. I am acquainted with instances in which great inconvenience and unhappiness have been produced by neglecting this rule ; either in which



repeated attacks have led to the waste of much property which might have been saved; or in which persons of sound mind have been needlessly kept under restraint. Those who superintend places for the reception of lunatics very well know, that proper restraint is often delayed, in consequence of prejudices against mad-houses, with the worst consequences to the destiny of the patient. Seven or eight years ago, a gardener in the country became insane, and believing that all prepared food contained poison, refused to take any thing but milk: he neglected his occupation, paid no attention to cleanliness, and was permitted to pass the whole of each day in a meadow near his own house, neither washed, nor shaved, nor in any way attended to. This was allowed to go on for three months, and then he was brought up to Bethlem Hospital; but so disguised by dirt, and his three months' beard, as to resemble a wild beast rather than a man. No sooner was he cleaned, and shaved, and decently dressed, than his whole manner changed, and his fear of poison left him. He continued to be insane, but the character of his insanity was quite altered. Earlier attention would therefore, in all probability, have completely restored him. And in other cases,—in which, from disorder of the digestive functions, the susceptibility of the brain becomes heightened as regards particular stimuli, and, disastrous events

concurring to derange the mind, individuals put an end to their own lives,—there can be no question that a prejudice against usual modes of restraint, and the want of that degree of restraint which would be salutary, have often occasioned the final and fatal exasperation of the malady.

The determination to subject an insane patient to restraint must rest, then, not upon the mere fact of his insanity, but upon the character of it in all cases, and, in some, upon the degree and character of the insanity taken together.

A disposition to throw away money on trifles is only inconvenient when it leads the individual to spend what he cannot well spare, or when it subjects him or his family to unnecessary privations. There can seldom be much obscurity respecting this propensity; but supposing it to exist in the greatest degree, it only justifies that degree of superintendence which is sufficient to prevent its indulgence: and this might be effected without seclusion, or imprisonment. In cases of this kind, there is either no interference, or the interference is too great. The extravagant fit lasts only for a time; and medical men and relatives dread the blame that would be thrown upon them by the world, and by the patient himself, when the individual whom they have declared to be mad, and whom they have deprived of the command of his property, is found, a few months afterwards, to



be perfectly well. But the insane extravagance, though not immediately ruinous, may lead to consequences highly inconvenient, or, by frequent repetition, to the embarrassment or actual ruin of the patient's affairs. These are the cases which strongly show the necessity of some new provision, by which the interests of the individual and of his family might be protected in his insanity, and his freedom be secured the instant he recovered his perfect mind. Restraint, which is perhaps resorted to, is often hurtful to the patient, whom it irritates and offends; watching and superintendence would be beneficial to him, and in most cases submitted to without much difficulty, if the patient was given to understand that they were intended to make restraint unnecessary. It is the mingling up of the idea of insanity with that of a madhouse which produces such mischievous neglect in some of these cases, and such mischievous interference in others.

Where an individual is not merely extravagant and foolish, but so extravagant and so foolish as to spend more money in an hour than he ought to do in a month, or a year, there can be no question about the propriety of restraint. The continuance of the restraint, however, should depend on the continuance of the incapacity. Watching may be necessary for some time longer, but restraint is not to be imposed

until watching again shows that it is absolutely required.

Few persons can have been very observant of what passes in the society in which they move, without being able to recollect families of which the happiness was completely sacrificed to the caprices, the eccentricity, or the ungovernable temper of some one individual; sometimes of a parent, sometimes of a son or daughter. Yet these sufferings, than which none can be more real, or more deeply, permanently, and widely affect the happiness of a family, are allowed to go on from year to year, because the person inflicting all this suffering is not raving mad. His removal from the circle in which he exercises his torture would often prove a complete cure; but it is seldom or never resorted to, because to advise removal from home is considered tantamount to advising removal to a Lunatic asylum. The moral restraint which would do so much good is omitted, because to restrain would be to avow madness in the case; and the madness once admitted, there is no resource looked for but confinement with other lunatics. No one would think of advising interference with every family unfortunate enough to be troubled with an ill-tempered member; but the cases to which I allude are notorious, and call for that modified restraint which now seems never to be thought of. Such cases are commonly wholly



neglected for some time ; the control of the individual over his own temper and actions goes on diminishing ; at last, his conduct becomes quite intolerable, and his madness is declared, and perhaps in an incurable form. Or if, on the other hand, restraint is determined on, it is not limited to removal from home, and the enforcing of an habitual forbearance or submission ; but the unfortunate person is carried off to a Lunatic house, shut up with insane people, and irritated to permanent madness.

Some individuals, who are often well disposed when not under the influence of passion, require occasional and frequent restraint, but not permanent restraint : the absence of all restraint, and the permanence, or long continuance of restraint, are equally pernicious to them. But the medical practitioner, if acquainted with the transitory nature of the paroxysms, fears to sign a certificate justifying interference, lest the power of interfering should be abused : or, if he is ignorant of the intermitting character of the malady, he signs a certificate which confides the individual to those who can only see in the most quiet mood of mind the calm that precedes another hurricane. Temporary restraint, and long continued superintendence, are the things necessary ; but relatives fear to have recourse to them, and practitioners doubt whether they have the power

to recommend them ; particularly in a class of cases in which the principal features are often concealed, and can only be discovered by that kind of watching. If a man so far recovers from his insanity as to be in a state in which he would be considered accountable for any crime he might commit, surely in the same state all restraint should be removed from his person and property. It is a curious inconsistency, and leads to very hurtful practice, that when once a man has become unable to take care of his property, it is not restored to him so long as there is any fear of a relapse ; whilst if he becomes what is termed lucid, and in his lucid state commits a crime, he is made to account for it, perhaps with his life.

Any difficulty that may exist in the way of framing regulations calculated to meet every case, should at least not be allowed to avert all attention from the numerous persons now confined in Lunatic houses, whose malady consists in those derangements of temper which appear to be often exclusively, and always most readily, excited by particular localities, particular duties, or the presence of particular individuals. It is a miserable thing to come away from a Lunatic house, as I have many times done, with a conviction that there were individuals in it whose liberation, and a proper superintendence, would turn wretchedness into comfort, without endangering the interests of any



human being; persons unfit, perhaps, to return to their families, or even to see them every day; but yet alive to warm affections, never more to be indulged; longing, as parents long, to see the faces of their children; but, in consequence of an infirmity of temper, doubtless of a morbid kind, and requiring superintendence, subjected to live and die in a place which was to them a prison, without a friend with whom they could unreservedly converse. A medical man should seriously consider, when he is about to put his hand to a certificate, what the effect of that certificate may be; and should not, by any consideration, be induced to commit a patient to confinement, unless he is perfectly convinced that separation from certain places and persons, and the superintendence of a faithful domestic, aided by the occasional confederacy of a few discreet friends, will not put aside all the evil of the case, whilst it leaves the patient in the enjoyment of all the happiness of which he is capable. Let him remember, that the evil he may be doing may extend itself over many years; that he is not only sanctioning immediate confinement, but that the confinement itself will be pointed to on many future occasions, to sanction its continuance, or to procure its repetition.

The mental weakness of old age has already been spoken of. As the vigour of the intellect declines, it naturally often happens that the emotions

become less under control; and aged people are made the dupes of pretended affection, or give themselves up to such frequent paroxysms of irascibility, as are quite inconsistent with the peace of those around them. The inconveniences, already so much dwelt upon, of too much neglect on the one hand, or too severe a restraint on the other, are felt in these cases also. The fear of being pointed at as one capable of oppressing the declining years of a relative, occasions numberless evils to be endured; property to be wasted, injustice to be committed to deserving expectants, foolish and fraudulent marriages to be contracted, and families to be disgraced. When medical men are consulted in these cases, they perhaps neglect to prescribe restraint, because the patient can hold a rational conversation. An old gentleman whose intellects are so impaired that he does not know whether he has received his rents or not, or who is unable to arrange his own dress decently, and requires, when up stairs, all the attention of a child, is seen by the medical practitioner, for the purpose of its being ascertained how far interference with his property is justifiable. The very servant who is hourly robbing him, takes care to send him down very carefully drest. The mere effect of habit is to cause the patient himself to be more guarded and exact in his manner and words in the presence of a stranger; he feels under a temporary



and a wholesome restraint; asks and answers common questions as well as most other old men, and is perfectly correct in his deportment. Two very serious evils may ensue. If the practitioner is unacquainted with the varieties of the mind, and their tendencies; and imagines that insanity and sanity cannot be mixed up together in the mind as they are in the body; he feels a degree of conscientious horror concerning any interference with an old gentleman who may be a little weak, but who, he is quite convinced, is no more mad than any of those about him. He turns his thoughts to the probable motives of interest, in the children or the friends, and, determining not to warrant any kind of restraint, inwardly applauds his own sagacity and incorruptibility. The friends, now more afraid to interfere than before, allow the old man to do as he likes, and he sets off, and gets married to a worthless and designing woman, or he alters his will in favour of some unprincipled person, or finds his way to some neighbouring town, where he becomes a disgraceful spectacle, and gets robbed of his money and ill treated; or perhaps he falls into the pond, and is drowned; all the world then exclaiming against the heartlessness and inattention of those about him, and the unaccountable supineness of those who were consulted about the case. Thus, the view of a very plain and easy duty is, not unfrequently,

obscured by prevalent opinions respecting the nature of insanity, and respecting the measures which insanity is supposed to render indispensable. If the patient, whom I have described as conducting himself so satisfactorily in a short and common conversation, is left to his own thoughts for a little time, and his attention is not excited by those about him, his state will become evident enough. He will be seen to be wandering and lost in his reflections, will perhaps rise up and endeavour to make his way out of the room, but without seeming to remember the situation of the door. Or he will declare his intention to set off on a long journey, or by many slight indications show that his mind is reduced to imbecility. In some, the effects of the recent restraint of a stranger's presence may be more permanent than in others; but half an hour, or a few hours at the utmost, will suffice to show the state of the case. The decision is important, and due time must be allowed for it. If one visit is not sufficient, the visit should be repeated, until the practitioner can give a clear and decided opinion.

But now comes the other danger. A sanguine practitioner sees the undoubted signs of folly and weakness in the old man, and forgetting that they are as much the effects of age as are the unsteadiness of his limbs, and the dullness of his hearing, pronounces the patient to be mad; and to gratify



persons of no feeling or compunction, consigns the poor patient to strange hands, and causes him to spend the little remnant of his days away from his own house, and unseen by any of those whom his former care perhaps preserved, and whom his wealth will enrich.

All that is required in these cases is, care of the person, and preservation of property. To do more is unjust and cruel; but to do this is what no man should hesitate to sanction, after he has had proper opportunities of satisfying himself that it is necessary; nor can there, in any case really requiring interference, be much difficulty in finding that it is required.

The question of a man's power to bequeath his property according to what is his real and sound will, is not always solved by the decision of that which relates to his being able to take care of it. A man may have little habitual command over his thoughts and actions, and yet be able, when roused to the effort, to say to whom he wishes his property to be left, or how it should be divided. His power to do this can only be determined by observation, and when much depends upon the decision, it should be prefaced by every precaution. It is the *degree* in which the mind is affected that is here to be determined. A will has sometimes been pronounced valid, although made during a very short lucid interval, that lucid interval being clearly esta-

blished ; and such a decision is consonant to justice and reason : the difficulty lies in establishing the fact. The mere establishment of evidence of foolish words and actions has, in other cases, but with much injustice, been considered sufficient to set aside a testament, which there was every reason to believe was really and truly that which the testator would confirm if he could be called to life again. A will made in conformity to an insane delusion, is, very justly, not considered valid. An insane parent may conceive a violent prejudice against a son or a daughter of irreproachable character, and disinherit them ; but the legal decision would be against the validity of the will. This is one of the cases in which the discovery of the delusion is important, because the delusion affects the property of others.\*

In the cases just considered, the only proper rule of restraint is that which the comfort of the individual, consistently with the comfort of others, renders necessary on the one hand, and practicable on the other. There are cases in which the madness is of a nature to threaten others, or the individual himself, with bodily danger ; the thoughts of the patient turning much on scenes of destruction, and cruelty, and blood. The looks, or the

\* See " A Report of the Judgment in *Dew v. Clark and Clark* ; delivered by the Right Hon. Sir John Nicholl, in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, Easter Term, 1826."



language, or some outrage already committed, commonly reveal this character of the malady in cases in which it prevails; and when once it is revealed, every thing that security demands must be at once resorted to, and persevered in until all danger is past. To say when the danger *is* past, is one of the most difficult things among the responsibilities of practising among the insane.

The fear of acting hastily and wrongly is continually kept up by the uncertain duration and sudden vicissitudes of the malady. A clergyman in Warwickshire told me, that he was requested, some years ago, to interfere respecting certain measures proper for securing a neighbour who had exhibited unquestionable symptoms of insanity; his neighbour, however, was not to be met with on the day when it was intended to remove him, and when he re-appeared, which was either the next day, or in a day or two afterwards, he was quite in a sound state, in which state he has lived with great comfort up to the present day. On the other hand, an instance came under my own observation, in which a gentleman had shown many proofs of disordered mind for the space of three or four months, and, his actions becoming dangerous, it was resolved to remove him. About two hours before the chaise was to call for him, he was so quiet and orderly in a conversation with the old family apothecary, that the latter gentleman rode off to the

relations of the patient, relenting all the way concerning the proposed restraint, and purposing to solicit its postponement; in which attempt he was only prevented by being overtaken by a messenger, before he had ridden half a mile, who came to inform him, that his apparently tranquil patient had nearly blown up his house, and his whole family, with gunpowder, having for that purpose thrown a pound and a half of it into the fire, sitting by to see it explode. In another case, a gentleman had made repeated attempts at self-destruction, but seemed to have got well, and was no longer much looked after: yet, after living comfortably at home for a little while, and having passed a cheerful evening in reading to his wife, he concluded it, when she had retired, by hanging himself in the parlour. These lamentable accidents are, of course, always productive of disagreeable feelings in the mind of a practitioner, but never more so than when he has been too confident of the absence of danger. It is questionable, perhaps, whether there are not in all these cases certain means, of which prudence might avail itself, for the purpose of ascertaining the exact state of the supposed convalescent's mind, as well as the existence of such intentions in a lunatic as are inconsistent with the safety of other persons, or with the preservation of his own existence. The lunatic may maintain a very guarded silence on these matters, so long as they remain quite unsus-



pected, but is not very well able, in general, to prevent his intentions becoming visible to those who have begun to suspect him. These intentions, too, are generally associated with certain recollections, or certain topics, or certain antipathies or prepossessions, which may be found out and brought into the conversation, in which case the lunatic can seldom conceal his agitation, his superstitious belief, his anger, or his inly cherished hope of full revenge. Indeed, he is often in no degree solicitous to conceal his feelings. There cannot be anywhere a more harmless person than Jonathan Martin; his manners are mild, his occupations are of the most peaceful description, his language is strikingly simple and unassuming; but take up the Bible, and you have touched the chord of his insanity,—you find that to destroy the noblest monuments of ancient piety and munificence seems to him a work to which God has especially called him. The effect of possessing a key to the excited feelings of a lunatic, is indeed always surprising to those unaccustomed to their peculiarities. You walk with a man who seems to delight in the simplest pleasures of a state of innocence, he admires the flowers of the field, and the beauty of the sky, or he dwells with satisfaction on the contemplation of whatever is generous and good; nothing can exceed the mildness of his manner; but a single word, calculated to rouse a morbid train of ideas; a name,

the reminiscence of a place, or any trifling inadvertency, will convert this placid being into a demon : the tones of his voice, his gestures, his countenance, his language, assume in a moment the expression of a fiend ; and you discover, that opportunity alone is wanting to effect some dreadful crime. The discovery of such a design is certainly not always so easy ; but wherever suspicion exists, strict superintendence is warranted, or various degrees of restraint must be determined upon, and steadily adhered to.

Although I have endeavoured to dissuade the practitioner from having recourse to severe and unnecessary modes of restraint, he must be very careful not to run into the opposite extreme of neglect ; for it may be added to the disadvantages arising out of popular modes of regarding insanity, that great carelessness is exhibited in many cases, in which a strait waistcoat and complete seclusion are not necessary, but in which watching would prevent the most terrible accidents. Whilst the medical man is doubting whether or not the patient is “bad enough” to be confined, or perhaps harassing himself with the needless attempt to reconcile the actual case to some oracular definition in which he has learnt to confide, his patient puts an end to his own life ; hangs himself, or cuts his throat in his dressing room, or blows his brains out with pistols, which ought to have been taken away



from him at the first visit. The relation of most of the cases of suicide contained in the public journals shows, that the event might have been prevented by common care, and that several attempts have commonly been made before the end was effected. In one instance, which occurred not very long ago, a man had tried to destroy himself by swallowing a key, and his life was saved by its extraction from his throat; but he was left alone the following night, with access to the same key, and after failing in some other attempts, had recourse to it again. In this case, however, though very tardily, restraint was employed, and the proper remedial means being applied, the disposition to suicide was removed; but in innumerable cases the individual has been insufficiently guarded after the disposition has been declared, and has at length accomplished self-destruction.

The safest and best rule is, that whenever a patient's mind is disturbed, all hurtful weapons and means of mischief should be removed. This precaution is in no cases more necessary than in ordinary fevers, during the delirious stage of which the patient should be most strictly watched, and never left alone; for the negligence of a few minutes may be fatal. I have known an instance in which a patient, left only for a few minutes in such circumstances, got out of bed, and threw

himself out of the window : and in a case which I was myself attending, the drowsiness of a nurse had nearly proved fatal, the patient having seized a loaded pistol, which was in a drawer in his bedroom, and which had not been removed. I had only left this patient lying quietly in his bed a few moments before, with strict charge to the nurse to attend to him, and knew nothing of his having fire-arms in the room, having previously had some removed which were hung up in it. If he had fired the pistol as soon as he got hold of it, he would have been a dead man before the nurse heard him, and before I could have returned to his chamber. Every practitioner, therefore, who wishes to avoid being subjected to most painful circumstances, should be vigilant in every case in which there is the slightest aberration of mind. In the cases which were alluded to in a former chapter, in which suicide follows slight but continued irritation, such caution is no less necessary.

A practitioner is liable to be called upon for his opinion concerning the actual state of mind of an individual, in circumstances different from those which have yet been noticed : where, some great crime having been committed, the question is, whether or not the criminal should be made responsible for it with his life. No question can well be more serious ; and it is not only em-



barrassed by all the common difficulties of ascertaining the exact state of the mind, but by the additional difficulty of determining whether or not, whatever may be the present state of the prisoner, he was mad at the time of committing the crime ; a thing of course hardly admitting of a satisfactory decision. On looking over the remarkable trials in which crimes have been perpetrated under these circumstances, it is impossible not to see that men have been executed for them, whose eccentricities have been greater than those which, in other cases, have been looked upon as justifying restraint of person and deprivation of property. The determination of the existence of the insanity is the medical question, and it must be determined in the usual manner ; sufficient time and opportunities being demanded for making such an investigation as the serious nature of the case requires. The criminal may be mad on one subject only, and that may be the subject of his crime ; he may be mad at intervals, and might be mad when he committed the crime ; but I believe the legislator will sometimes be inclined to consider punishment justifiable in such cases, for the protection of society from other monomaniacs, or from those occasionally insane, whom yet such an example may restrain. At all events, a man who has once in his madness committed murder, or who has attempted to commit murder, must be secured

for the remainder of his life against a repetition of such an act ; and the more doubtful, transitory, or limited his insanity, the more necessary will it be to insist on that confinement which all would agree was required in plainer cases. The *prevention* of the crime is what might be more attended to than it is ; for the act is often that of a mischievous idiot, whose restraint would appear necessary long before he proceeded to such daring or cruel mischief, if some erroneous notion respecting his not being mad, or his being considered idiotic, did not blind medical observers to the consideration of the dangerous character of his imbecility.

In many instances, the crime which attracts public indignation has been preceded, in a weak and capricious mind, by a long course of indulgence in small outrages ; until the half-crazy and half-idiotic person has found, that the reputation of being silly or mad secured immunity from punishment ; he has then begun to indulge in acts of dishonesty or of wanton cruelty ; and then, perhaps, to fancy how children would look if their heads were cut off, or to find amusement, like the Count de Charolois, in shooting masons and tilers, partly to show his skill, and partly to see the wounded men tumble off the tops of houses. It is certainly a question, whether the punishment of such persons is not justified by the degree of consciousness



retained by them. I speak here with reference to our prevalent modes of punishment, of putting the prisoner to death, although I am myself among those who question the propriety of shortening a man's life under any circumstances; since no mortal judge can presume to say what mental changes the Creator of all men may yet desire to be experienced, even by the vilest criminal, before he goes to his account; and because I believe other punishments might be inflicted, which would equally, by the impression they would make on those likely to imitate the offender's crimes, deter them from such imitation, and would consequently afford to society all the advantage which is proposed by the infliction of any punishment at all.

It is also not to be forgotten, that idiots are liable to sudden paroxysms of violence, no less than of noisy folly, which they are unable to restrain. During their temporary excitement, they may destroy any of those confined with them, but with as little malice or consciousness of doing wrong as when they request others to destroy *them*; for an idiot has been known to request another idiot to cut off his head, and the request has been complied with, and with the most perfect good-will on both sides. These individuals exhibit an union of such inconsiderate cruelty and depravity with so much apparent cunning and contrivance, so much imprudence with so much design, that every

conscientious man, who gives these circumstances full consideration, will shrink from doing more against such miserable creatures, than subjecting them to that restraint which the safety of other persons absolutely requires. Delinquents of this description are, perhaps, not unable to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong; but their will is not governed by their understanding, and they want the power of restraining themselves from that which, when committed, they are afraid to reflect upon. Their will remains; but it springs from depraved sensations and emotions, or from passions inordinate and unrestrained, and is not under the direction of sound mental faculties. They are, then, as regards their actions, devoid of self-government to a degree which renders their actions inconsistent or wicked; and they cannot be permitted to have complete liberty, because that liberty would be incompatible with the security of other persons.

Insane patients, who have no intention to destroy themselves, are sometimes led into danger by believing that they are invulnerable or immortal: a man will walk out of a window, or on the top of the house, thinking himself protected from all possibility of injury. The safety of the patient himself, in such a case, requires that he should be restrained. The same error of the understanding has led them to put a direct end to themselves,



that they might join the fabled gods and goddesses. Others have killed their children, to save them from the wickedness of the world ; and some have committed murder, that they might be hanged for it, desiring death.

I was, a few years ago, requested to see a man, confined in gaol for the crime of cutting off his wife's head. This man had made no attempt to deny the deed, or to escape the consequences. For some time after he was taken to prison, his conduct was quiet, and on common subjects he would talk in a common way with his fellow-prisoners. When he was asked about the murder, and reminded that he would certainly be hanged for it, he always said he did not know that he had done any harm. After being confined five or six weeks, he occasionally showed a disposition to be violent ; and, on one occasion, put a handkerchief round his neck as if he intended to hang himself. Subsequently, he became taciturn, and his demeanour changed to that of an imbecile person, which it was at the time of my seeing him. He wore a woollen cap, which he had taken from one of the other prisoners, and carried a piece of wood about with him, which he represented, by signs, to be his sword ; for he would not speak, nor answer any questions ; only breaking silence now and then by repeating the word "cabbage," without any kind of meaning. He had buttons and

other common trinkets tied round his wrist ; and he had made a great many attempts to walk out of the hospital of the prison, in which he was lodged. When a watch or any shining substance was shown to him, he would assume an idiotic smile, and begin to dance.

Notwithstanding all these appearances, I could not help suspecting that the man was playing a part. The nature of his crime, and his conduct after committing it, certainly went far to support the idea of his insanity ; and the insanity might have been coming on some time before the murder ; and although he might be cunning, he might still be insane. Yet the mixed character of his mental disorder, and the rapid supervention of idiotcy on a quiet form of insanity, in a man of thirty-five, seemed to me to be unusual circumstances. There was nothing in his manner which *might* not very easily have been the effect of imitation ; and although he would not answer questions, I observed that he both heard and understood them ; at least, when I asked him, a little sharply and unexpectedly, if he did not know me, he immediately looked up, which he would not do at other times, and shook his head. I saw too, that although he never looked directly at any one, except at that particular moment, he was in reality very watchful of their movements, even when they were distant from him : several



proofs of this occurred in a short time, and he always made a sudden run towards the door when any body opened it to go out.

I mention this case exactly as it was presented to me, without attempting, even now, to say whether the man was mad or not. What, however, I wish to found upon the occurrence of such cases, is the necessity for a further investigation of them than is commonly permitted or thought necessary. The medical gentleman of the prison thought the proposition for further investigation quite uncalled for by the case in question ; indeed I believe he thought any suggestion to that effect very troublesome, if not impertinent : for he had long before pronounced that the man was a lunatic, and he had represented to me, before I saw the patient, that among other extraordinary symptoms, I should find the pulse so singularly rapid, that it was impossible to count it. This was one of the errors into which a practitioner is almost sure to be betrayed, if he allows his powers of observation to be disturbed by his apprehensions. The prisoner's pulse, when I examined him, was between ninety and a hundred ; but he had very few, if any, corporeal indications of insanity. His appetite for food was considerable. But his tongue was clean, his bowels were regular, his sleep was tranquil, the state of his skin was natural, and his breath was not pecu-

liarly affected. Even the frequency of the pulse seemed to be accounted for by a severe cold ; not to mention the possibility of a little mental agitation.

In all cases of this kind, the patient should be watched when he is alone, and by night as well as by day ; and if he is feigning, he will almost infallibly be detected. The proposition of severe remedies, which some have advised, is not very likely to drive a man out of a line of conduct adopted to avoid death. But the suggestion, in the patient's hearing, of certain peculiarities commonly forming a part of insanity, such as great talkativeness, or peculiar gestures or postures, might sometimes lead to their imitation, and to a consequent discovery of imposition. On the supposition of madness, too, the proper remedies should be applied, and their effects might furnish useful evidence. Nothing of this kind was done in this case ; and, some weeks afterwards, the man was brought into court to be tried ; but he was so extremely violent on that occasion that the judge was glad to order him back again. Even this circumstance seems to me to make the case more suspicious ; but I know the difficulty of overcoming a prejudice once admitted, and acknowledge that the case may have been one in which the insanity was not of a common character.

Numerous instances, in which questions of this



kind have arisen, are to be found in the French and other Continental medical journals ; and many of them show the great difficulty of pronouncing a decided opinion in cases in which no man would willingly run the risk of being wrong.

The case of Papavoine, who was tried in Paris in 1825, for the murder of two children in the wood of Vincennes, was very curious. A young man, whose father had been insane, and who was himself of a melancholy and unsocial disposition, had experienced some misfortunes, and shown indisputable symptoms of a disordered mind, inasmuch, that when he was going to visit a friend in a distant part of the country, his mother wrote to desire that he might be watched. Ten days afterwards, he met two children walking with their nurse, in the wood, pretended to embrace them, and stabbed them both. He ran away, was taken, denied the crime, and was put into prison ; whilst there, he attempted to set his bed on fire, and he wounded one of his fellow-prisoners. But when the day of his trial came, he displayed a sound and most acute intellect, and made a most ingenious defence, not true in all its particulars ; and he was consequently supposed to have affected insanity, and to have been instigated to the murders by some motive which all the activity of the police could not discover. Yet all the circumstances of the case lead to a belief, that he was not affectedly

but really insane when he committed the murder, and was influenced by some sudden impulse, or some transient delusion. Perhaps, as he himself stated in his defence, he really supposed the children to belong to the Royal Family; or he might be merely impelled by that desire of destruction which has been already noticed among the dangerous caprices of the mad. M. Esquirol, however, is of opinion, that Papavoine was not insane at the time of the murder; M. Georget, on the other hand, says he feels so much doubt about it as a physician, that he should have voted for acquittal as a juryman. This difference of opinion, between men so competent to form correct opinions, teaches us, at least, the difficult nature of our duty, when we have to determine whether society is to be protected from a malignant dissembler, or an unfortunate madman is to be rescued from an unjust execution.

Medical men are generally so disconcerted by the members of the legal profession, when examined by them, that it requires more than ordinary circumspection not to become exposed to misrepresentation, or even led into incorrectness of expression or of opinion. Appearance in a crowded court, and any thing like contention with men whose professional duties more habituate them to publicity, are so remote from the ordinary though not less important duties of physicians and



surgeons, that they are almost always troubled and alarmed when compelled to appear in such unusual circumstances. The duty of an advocate is to defend the cause of his client, without much regard to any thing else; but the practitioner must not be led to sanction doctrines inconsistent with the peace of society. A man was tried in one of the French courts for the murder of his mistress, whom he had detected with his rival. Another criminal was tried for killing his own daughter, because she would not elope with him. In both the cases, there were few signs of madness: the crimes were the result of ungovernable passion. But passion is a short madness, and on this the advocate in one case, M. Bellart, founded an eloquent appeal to the jury for acquittal. "There are different kinds of fools and madmen," he observed,—“those whom nature has condemned to the eternal loss of reason, and those who only lose it instantaneously, in consequence of some great affliction, of some great surprise, or some similar cause. As for the rest, there is no difference between the two kinds of madness, except the difference of duration; and he whose head is turned by despair for some days, or for some hours, is as completely mad during his ephemeral agitation as he who raves for years.” Surely, to admit this excuse for crime, would be to excuse every degree and kind of wickedness as madness; and, even

admitting the truth of the advocate's reasoning, it could not be acted upon without exposing society to the most unrestrained and outrageous crimes of the sanguinary and depraved. The fear of punishment must second the imperfect operations of education and moral feeling, in preventing the indulgence of passions to this mad extent; for the man who commits a crime from passion *might* have been taught or enabled to restrain the excess of that passion. The madman can *not* be taught or enabled to do so; and the difficulty is, to say, in a particular case, whether the mind was in a state to exercise restraint or not. It is most important to make the distinction; for although the advocate may be permitted to use even a dangerous argument, in order to increase the guards which the mercy of the law throws round the accused person, these arguments must not have the sanction of those professional witnesses who are called to make a solemn deposition as to facts.

Other excuses have sometimes been admitted; as drunkenness, somnambulism, ignorance and prejudices, epilepsy, hysteria, being deaf and dumb, and what are called longings in pregnant women. To all these the observations just made may be extended. The inducements to self-control must not be weakened; and society must be protected.

So many circumstances concurring to make a



practitioner's duty, in cases of supposed insanity, difficult, it is impossible not to feel desirous of availing ourselves, to the fullest extent, of any observations, which experience has confirmed, concerning the external appearance and physical characters of insane persons. These, which are often plainly legible, are also often obscure. The most common precursors which I have noticed have been, loss of usual sleep, with uneasy feelings in the head, as of tension or burning; or uneasy sensations referred to the epigastrium; expressions of agitation or dread; or passions exceeding the usual effect of the provocation. Many other signs have been noticed, but all are not of equal importance. Impairment of some of the senses is not uncommon; or an increased acuteness of sense, which is made a subject of boasting with the patient: thus, there may be insensibility, or extreme sensibility, to changes of temperature, to objects of taste and smell, or to agents usually acting on the bodily functions; often most observed in the diminished efficacy of purgative medicines. There may be loss or increase of the natural appetites; refusal to take food, or voracious desire for it; unusual and unaccountable capriciousness of the affections; suspicion of friends and of servants; earnestness about trifles, concerning which the individual has heretofore been indifferent, and, at the same time, indifference to real

evils ; inconsistent and mutable desires for objects usually exciting no particular emotion, as fine clothes, horses, carriages, trinkets ; and, perhaps, carelessness concerning great occupations and objects of pursuit. It is not uncommon to see a fantastic mode of dress indulged in, a love of finery, or oddity of attire, and often with a want of habitual cleanliness. The change of dress is sometimes very slight ; a man in his insane fits will even wear his hat in a different way from what he is accustomed to do when he is well ; or a woman will show the mental change in the arrangement of a handkerchief or a ribbon. Not unfrequently, there is an unwonted display of generosity or of penuriousness. Very often, the disorder is indicated by marked change of habits as regards food, exercise, clothing, conversation, society, and sleep. The tone of the voice is often, perhaps generally, altered, becoming higher or lower ; and the words are uttered more slowly, or more rapidly, or more forcibly than usual, or sometimes in a soft whisper. The habitual expression of the face is, I think, always changed ; but this we have not always opportunities of knowing ; nor can all the change that is seen to be wrought be described in any words. In several instances in which previous acquaintance with the patient has enabled me to observe the change, the cornea, or transparent part of the eye, has seemed to become



more prominent, and the pupil contracted or dilated; and these changes have been observed by others, of greater experience among lunatics. The movements of the patient are often rapid, restless, and unsteady; his resolutions are not fixed, and his discourse is flighty and incoherent. His look is generally unsteady and timid, and he sometimes shows a singular inattention to the objects and persons about him. It is also occasionally found that the heat of the scalp is increased, and perhaps partially; that the pulse is quick and small, or unusually languid; that the skin is dry, or unusually moist, and often with a very peculiar odour. The tongue is commonly, in the beginning of the malady, white, or otherwise indicative of disorder of the stomach, or of general irritation; and the breath is generally offensive. The patient occasionally experiences much irritation referred to the fingers or toes, and will cut or injure them.

Such are the appearances which, in greater or less number, will perhaps be found to mark, by their accession and decline, the coming on and the departure of the mental disturbance. The observation of them, on the part of those who profess to undertake the bodily or mental treatment of the patient, cannot be too diligent or too minute, provided it be at the same time accurate, and receive no tinge from fancy or from fear; for they are things which will guide him, on the one hand,

in his persevering application of proper means of restoration, and on the other, to that rarer wisdom which teaches when medicines or moral means should be desisted from ; a wisdom which is valuable in the management of all diseases, but, as the humane and experienced Pinel has justly observed, particularly important with relation to maniacal disorders.

The symptoms of growing imbecility can hardly be mistaken. The peculiar loss of expression, the slovenliness, the unmeaning laughter, the vacant look, the ineffectual speech, the insignificance portrayed in every gesture, cannot escape a practitioner of the least observation.

The appearances of idiocy, when once manifest, remain permanent. The peculiarities indicative of insanity are not constant, they may appear for a few days, disappear, and appear again, and this many times ; and during many months or even during years ;—and let it never be forgotten, that in ordinary cases they merely establish the fact of the mind being disordered, a fact to which the practitioner should only attach what may be called a professional importance ; and which has no immediate bearing on the necessity for confinement, restraint, or coercion. In the case of criminals, also, although a medical witness cannot but desire to lean to the merciful side, he must not forget that these observations tend only to



show that the mind is not in a healthy state, and do *not* of themselves show whether or not the criminal had power to resist his propensity to crime; and that if mercy to the criminal is carried too far, it may involve injustice and a want of mercy to other persons. Where lunacy is feigned, it may be impossible to determine that it is so, without watching the patient for some time, when he does not know that he is watched; and by night as well as by day. Various devices have succeeded in the detection of such cases, but I can hardly imagine a case which would be proof against an efficient system of observation.

It may be useful to remember that not only does the spoken language of a man indicate the state and character of his mind; but the form in which his thoughts are arranged and expressed when he writes, or, in other words, what is called with relation to composition, his style. The style of a writer takes its character from his mind; and it does not seem more correct, notwithstanding ancient authority and common belief to the contrary, to say that an orator may be made, than that a poet may be made. A man who thinks clearly, supposing him to have been well-instructed, will express himself clearly: a man who does not think so well, even with equal advantages of education, will never express himself in the same way. The closeness of attention and comparison,

and the liveliness of the imagination, are equally conspicuous in the writings of authors characterised by such mental endowments, whatever may be the subject of which they treat; the accurate investigator will be seen to more advantage in a philosophical treatise, but his accuracy will be equally conspicuous in trifles: the man of livelier fancy will make trifles more attractive; but if occupied on the gravest subject his fancy will still show itself.

It hence arises, that the letters of a patient who is really of unsound mind often betray the fact, notwithstanding all his desire to conceal it: and great advantage might be derived from inducing those to write, the state of whose mind it is found difficult otherwise to ascertain. Lunatics will even write freely on subjects connected with their insanity, when they have self-command enough not to speak of them. It has certainly now and then been of great use to me, in cases in which it was impossible to hear unmoved the lamentable representations made by patients, respecting the injustice of their confinement, to be allowed to read the undoubted proofs of incoherency in their letters and in their poetry, which showed at least, that even admitting they had been improperly confined, they were not improperly detained. The written production will not only often disclose the prevalent form of the insanity, but indicate the



extent to which the impairment has proceeded, better than common conversation, in which mere habit will often prevent the inaccuracies observable in a lunatic's letter. The rapid transitions and odd unions of discordant subjects, the relations of things which have not happened, and could not have happened, are in many cases very remarkable ; and a forgetfulness of common modes of spelling, or of the arrangement of the letters of words well known, will be evinced by maniacs who have been well educated, and who would commit no such mistakes but for their malady. But I must again observe, and now for the last time, that these are but indications of an impaired mind, and that the impairment may not make the patient's liberty dangerous to himself or to others.

I have thus endeavoured to afford some guidance to the practitioner, without concealing the difficulties which he will meet with : but if medical men do not neglect the foregoing particulars, they will not find the public unreasonable in their expectations. It must not be expected that medical advisers can, by any care, always avoid error. The designs of a lunatic can only be known by his looks, or his words, or his actions ; and none of these give invariable warning of even his most dreadful outrages. The desire to commit murder, or suicide, or to set fire to his house, may arise suddenly in his mind, and be carried into immediate

execution ; no one can always be prepared against this ; and to confine every person of doubtful sanity, because he may possibly commit such actions, is evidently impracticable.

If a medical man invariably refuses to sanction interference or restraint in all cases, except those in which he can satisfactorily show reason for thinking that the patient's liberty would be inconsistent with the security of his property or of his person, or attended with danger to the property or persons of others, he may appear in court, and account for what he has done, on all occasions without anxiety, and without any of the fears which harass the minds of those who, forgetting the true end and intention of interference and restraint, are obliged to dwell with painful earnestness upon particulars not bearing on the important questions concerning which the jury have to determine. In every case, he will have a plain and simple duty to perform, and will not be betrayed into the extravagancies of manner and language, or into the inconsistencies and the errors, which have often brought ridicule, and sometimes a suspicion of evil designs, on well-meaning but incautious men.

Lastly, if I may flatter myself that my medical readers have assented to the rules laid down in this chapter, I must still take the liberty, before concluding it, to remind them, that no circumstances are more unfavourable to the recollection of rules



than those under which they are commonly required to act in cases of mental disorder. The application to them will often have been delayed until some pressing fear has driven the friends of the lunatic to resort to a medical practitioner for immediate safety : full of apprehension, they make the strongest representations, and are dissatisfied unless they find him whom they consult as ready to act as they are. The least that they expect is the immediate imposition of force ; but the practitioner is not to fulfil their expectations without cautious investigation. When any kind of danger is apprehended, or appears probable, the patient should be immediately seen ; but every subsequent step must depend on what the practitioner himself believes, and not on the opinion of alarmed friends, who have thrown a great responsibility upon him. Nor must he merely be prepared to act thus prudently when he suspects there is something wrong in the intentions of those applying to him ; he must be equally careful, when he is satisfied that no evil motive exists. If he neglects this caution, he will almost inevitably become involved in very unpleasant circumstances. It is difficult to represent all the embarrassments of the case. It is reported to him that the patient is about to commit some rash act, and must be instantly secured. Afraid of the consequences of neglect, the practitioner finds himself at a loss how to effect the patient's security.

A keeper is immediately wanted; but how is a keeper to be procured? If application is made to the public asylums, all assistance is withheld in this emergency. Recourse is necessarily had to a private establishment. Circulars are sent round occasionally from some of the private madhouses, stating that careful keepers may be immediately commanded; and in the fancied danger of the case, these applications, despised perhaps before, are gladly and anxiously resorted to. The careful keepers are commonly, as may be supposed, not unwilling to take the patient to the private establishment to which they are attached, and the practitioner finds himself at once implicated exactly in the way he wished to avoid. Moreover, the keepers represent, that if the patient makes any resistance, they "have nothing to do but to put on a strait waistcoat, and there will be no difficulty." It is so agreeable a thing to be freed from difficulty, that when once a practitioner has proceeded thus far, it requires more than ordinary forbearance not to consent. But the practitioner must recollect *at that time*, or the public may one day very disagreeably remind him of it, that such measures can only be justified by the existence of positive danger to the lunatic himself, or to others; to his person, or to the persons of others; to his property, or to the property of others.

The difficulty of the practitioner is least when



the danger to the patient is greatest. If suicide has been attempted or threatened, or if violence is displayed towards others, there need be no hesitation in his mind; for suicide and violence *must* be prevented. The patient himself, notwithstanding the domination of a propensity of this kind, is sometimes desirous of being taken care of, and grateful, when he recovers, for the restraint that has been imposed upon him. Some of them, when they find that they are getting wrong again, or that the old fancies are returning, will voluntarily apply to those who took care of them before, and beg to be confined again, until the disposition to violence is passed.

But perplexity often arises in cases wherein the danger merely regards property. I was lately requested to see a gentleman under circumstances of this kind, and in which all the inconveniences I have mentioned were strongly felt. The patient had just returned from a distant colony, where he had held an appointment, which he had resigned for the purpose of coming to England, to prosecute a claim he conceived he had on certain family estates. It was evident that he had become the victim of a delusion on this subject, and that every circumstance which had taken place for some time past had become mingled with, and added strength to, his resolution. He would not see his father,

disowning that he was his son ; and he devoted a large portion of his time to making certain inquiries, connected with his supposed claims to higher descent and considerable property. He was about to set off into Yorkshire, on business connected with these views ; and his friends desired that restraint should be imposed upon him, and even that he should be immediately removed to a lunatic asylum. A single line from a medical practitioner would, it was plainly to be seen, have been regarded by the persons accustomed to take charge of lunatics, as authority to use any degree of force. The patient was living at an hotel, in a very quiet manner, and not at all inconsistently with his circumstances ; his deportment was perfectly calm and collected ; and although his delusion was clearly enough indicated by his conversation, it was productive of so little immediate inconvenience, or prospect of inconvenience, that the friends were persuaded to let him pursue his investigation a little longer, in the hope that he would become tired of and abandon it altogether : they were persuaded at least not to interfere with him merely on account of a delusive notion, not more extreme than the delusions which occupy a corner of the mind in many individuals, during the whole of their lives, without prejudice to their welfare.



It must be confessed, however, that there are cases of delusion which, materially threatening the prosperity of the individual, by inducing him to discontinue his employment in the expectation of fancied wealth, require some interference; and the evil at present is, that it is impossible to effect that wholesome interference without a preliminary document which is considered a warrant for such extreme measures as the case does not require. A practitioner who knows what *may* be done under the sanction of his certificate, does not feel himself justified in writing the certificate in many cases where some kind of restraint is required; but others are less apprehensive of the consequences, and readily accord a document which removes a man, who is not disqualified for the enjoyments or duties of ordinary life, to a prison, in which he cannot meet with a rational associate; where his delusion becomes confirmed by the treatment he receives, and where he probably adds one more to the long and melancholy list of incurable madmen. In his anxiety to shun these evils, however, the practitioner is certainly exposed to danger of another kind. If the patient whom I have just mentioned, and who is now performing his needless journey into Yorkshire, should become worse on the road, and destroy himself; it would be said that he should have been secured in

London; although if he returns a little cured of his delusion it will be acknowledged that to have detained him in town would have been prejudicial and wrong. A medical man must encounter these unavoidable dangers with as much indifference as a military man encounters dangers of another kind. A man's insanity may be of a nature which does not justify restraint to-day, and to-morrow he may be raving mad, and destroy himself; but this gives us no authority for inflicting restraint upon every man whose mind is not perfectly sound. What medical men require, is authority to proportion restraint to these slight cases. At present, they must either forego restraint altogether, or effect it by means which may be perverted as much to the disadvantage of themselves as of the patient.

I have learnt, whilst these pages have been passing through the press, that some of the members of my profession have refused to give an opinion on a case of supposed insanity, when required to do so by the Lord Chancellor; and this refusal has been recommended, by a part of the medical press, as an example which others ought to imitate. I hope it is not true that any physician or surgeon has acted so improperly. Instead of doing what will be construed by the public into that of which it is unquestionably the expression,—ignorance of the circumstances which



should be regarded in the attempt to form an opinion;—instead of hoping, by a refusal to act with gentlemen of the legal profession, either to embarrass *them*, or to secure immunity for ignorance;—instead of seeming to cherish a desire, of which medical men have been too long suspected, to seclude the subject of insanity from inquiry, and to establish a medical monopoly of a disgraceful kind; it will be much more honourable in physicians and surgeons, and more conformable to the obligations imposed upon them, by their station, to acknowledge the real difficulties in the way of a decision, when difficulties exist; and, by keeping in view the only justifiable causes of interference, to perform their duty with that readiness, discrimination, and firmness, which the public have a right to expect from them, and which the welfare of lunatics especially requires. The duty may sometimes be difficult; but if they sincerely endeavour to perform it, they will never be deprived of the protection of authority. To decline it altogether, would be to bring ignominy on those who ought only to be known by the benefits their profession enables them to confer upon society.

## CHAPTER XI.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE BETTER PROTECTION AND CARE  
OF THE INSANE.

THE facts which have been alluded to in the foregoing Inquiry, show, that the present regulations regarding the Insane are at once inefficient for the protection of the insane themselves, and dangerous to the public;—that it results from them, that some are improperly confined, and others improperly at large;—that whilst the eccentric are endangered, those actually mad are often allowed a dangerous liberty;—that the public are dissatisfied, and medical men harassed and perplexed.

Circumstances illustrative of all these points have been so fully stated in the preceding pages, and the suggestions arising out of them are, for the most part, so obvious, that my principal endeavour will be to make my own remarks on this particular head as brief as possible.

In making regulations for the Insane, two things are to be considered, justice and humanity to individuals, and a regard for the public welfare. The first consideration forbids the imposition of any restraint which is not in any case absolutely



necessary ; the second demands certain regulations, comprehending provisions for the secure guarding of those who are in any sense unfit to govern their own movements, and an efficient superintendence of all persons whose disordered state of mind may make occasional restraint indispensable. The existing arrangements, whilst they are often inconsistent with the justice and humanity due to individuals, do not always provide for the security of the person and of property : excess of rigour, and indiscriminate plans of restraint, being productive, in many cases, of a reluctance to interfere, where private or public interest requires that there should be *some* interference.

Other evils, arising out of the present manner of providing for lunatics, are, that they are often confided to persons who are unacquainted with bodily and mental disorders, and who neglect such treatment as might conduce to recovery ;—that it is the interest of such persons to keep patients under their care who ought not to be so confined ;—that by associating lunatics with lunatics, the general chances of recovery are much diminished ;—that the constant efficient superintendence, which is necessary to recovery, is not possible in lunatic houses under the present system ;—and that the want of opportunities of studying mental diseases contributes to perpetuate most of the existing evils.

I conceive that new arrangements might be made, which would obviate all or the greater part of these difficulties ; but, to effect this, the whole subject requires to be considered almost without reference to what has been done before. What is required, is,—

That no person, who is not insane, should be treated as an insane person.

That all, who are insane, should be properly taken care of.

That the friends of individuals who are insane, should be able to procure such immediate aid as the case requires.

That all who are in a sound state of mind should feel assured, that in case of becoming afflicted with insanity, they would be protected ; that their property would be carefully preserved, and their persons secured from danger or ill-treatment ; that they would not be excluded from the observation of friends, and of persons desirous of restoring them to society ; that they would be frequently visited by those who would not allow them to remain in confinement any longer than might be absolutely necessary, or to be at any time subjected to any restraint which the safety or security of their own persons or property, or the safety and security of the persons or property of others, did not positively demand.

That every remedial means, medical, moral, and



mental, will be patiently, and perseveringly, and scientifically employed, for their restoration to sound mind.

That medical men, by enjoying better opportunities of acquiring practical knowledge in cases of insanity, should be assisted in devising improved methods of treatment.

To accomplish all these objects, it would be desirable—

That all persons of unsound mind should become the care of the state; and should continue so until recovery.

Every Lunatic Asylum should be the property of the State, and be controlled by public officers.

Every Lunatic Asylum should be a School of Instruction for Medical Students, and a place of education for male and female keepers.

No patient should be confined in a Lunatic Asylum, except on the particular representation of the relatives or friends, that he could not have proper care and attention out of it.

All the officers and keepers of each Asylum should be appointed by the Secretary of State.

There should be attached to every Asylum a certain number of medical officers and keepers, (residing in the house, or not,) ready, at all times, to attend to insane patients at their own houses. The medical associates, out of the house, should not be exclusively practitioners in cases of insanity.

As soon as signs of insanity appeared in any individual, notice of it should be given at the public asylum for the district, and the individual should immediately be visited by a medical officer connected with the establishment; either by a medical assistant residing in the house, or by a medical associate out of the house.

If it was represented that a keeper was required, a keeper should also be immediately sent from the establishment; but in this case the representation should, generally, be made by the medical attendant of the family requiring aid, and always confirmed by the medical officer of the establishment, or by the medical associate visiting the patient.

A register of all the patients, in and out of the asylum, should be kept in the central establishment of each district or county; and all persons on the Insane List should be visited by a medical officer associated with the asylum, at least once in fifteen days in chronic cases, and at least once in seven days in recent cases, it being understood that the regular medical attendant had the general management of the case.

Whenever one of the medical officers of the asylum, either assistant or associate, was the sole attendant, he should see the patient, in recent cases, daily. A weekly medical report should be made of each case.



Visitors, (not medical practitioners,) should be attached to each asylum, in sufficient number to visit the asylum itself once a week ; and also to pay a visit to each person on the Insane List, and out of the asylum, at least once in fifteen days ; and to make a monthly report of the state of each.

The patients *out* of the asylum being the majority, and consisting of all whose circumstances would ensure them proper attendance—better arrangements might be made for the smaller number in the public asylums, or central houses of reception, of which there might be one in each county, two in London, and one in any considerable town.

The total number of Lunatics in England and Wales is about thirteen thousand.\* Of these, probably, one half are persons in good circumstances, none of whom should be placed in the Lunatic Asylum, unless by the particular wish of their friends, sanctioned by the usual medical attendant of the family.

There should be smaller houses in the neighbourhood of the asylum, for the reception of one or two lunatics, such houses to be governed by the general regulations of the larger establishments. To these such patients should be sent as require

\* In England, 12,500. In Wales, 900.—*Sir Andrew Halliday's Letter to Lord Robert Seymour*. Underwood, 1829.

removal from home, but whose friends do not wish them to go to the asylum.

Of the remaining lunatics in the kingdom, a part, perhaps one half, would be in circumstances which would enable them to defray a portion of the expense of taking care of them; the rest would consist of paupers. The patients of both these classes would necessarily be taken to the asylums.

No lunatic person should be allowed to remain in any workhouse, or in any private house kept by persons professing to receive lunatics.

Information should be given, at the central establishment, of any insane individuals who might be wandering about, and committing, or threatening to commit, actions inconsistent with the safety and comfort of others; and these individuals should be examined, and if necessary, confined at home, or removed to the asylum. The concealment of lunatics, or the neglect to report the name and case of a lunatic to the asylum, should be punished.

Attention should be given, on application, to individuals exhibiting any other form of insane propensity; as great extravagance, continued habits of dissipation, or other eccentricity, which the relatives of such individuals should look upon as requiring some restraint.

In the medical report of each patient, it should



invariably be stated what degree of restraint was required at the time of making the report; and the reports should be carefully registered.

Any suggestions made by the visitors of the asylum and the out-patients of the district, should be laid before the officers of the central institutions, and before a quorum of commissioners, or of the board of visitors, at a weekly meeting.

The visitors should not continue in office longer than twelve months at a time; and should be sufficiently numerous to make the superintendence of out-patients practicable.

By these regulations, all the medical practitioners in each district might, in turn, be accustomed to attend to lunatics; and all medical students might have an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the forms of mental disorder. The only medical men who would be required to devote their *whole* time to the care of the insane, would be the chief officer of each central institution, and his assistants. The charge committed to the chief officer being very important, and demanding all his time, the remuneration ought to be proportionate. No one should be elected chief medical officer of an institution, who would not engage to hold the office for at least three years; nor should any house-pupil be admitted, or keeper or nurse allowed to receive instruction in the house, for a shorter period than

six months. When the system had been brought into full operation, the chief officers of the different establishments throughout the kingdom should be elected from those who had been house-pupils or assistants; and the smaller houses, for the reception of single and wealthy patients, might also be each under the management of a person similarly elected, though still under public control.

Each lunatic confined in the separate and smaller houses, and those, also, confined at home, or requiring to be constantly attended, although not needing restraint, might also thus be provided, from among the medical assistants and keepers of the central establishment, with attendants suited to their station, circumstances, and degree of insanity; and every assistant and keeper, so placed, would act under the inspection of the medical and other visitors of the asylum.

The security, comfort, and proper management of those out of the asylum being thus provided for, each central asylum should present a model of that excellent management, with the principles of which it would be desirable that each pupil or assistant, on leaving the institution, should be thoroughly imbued.

The asylum should be in a cheerful, but not in an exposed situation. Each room, and all the passages and galleries, should be warm, light, and



well aired. The buildings should be plain, and not too lofty; the airing ground dry, and commanded by the windows of rooms of inspection.

If possible, no lunatic should at any time be with another lunatic; at all events, the classification should be such as to secure the quiet from the violent, and the convalescent from all the rest.

Occupations and diversified amusements should be provided, suitable to the different habits of the patients.

Every patient should have a superintendent or keeper with him during a great part of each day, so long as there remained a hope of cure. During a part of each day, also, the chief medical officer, or one of his assistants, should be with each patient, particularly with those who showed signs of amendment; and it should be considered the principal duty of the medical officers to avail themselves of opportunities of effecting the restoration of each patient to mental health. To converse with, to soothe, to amuse, to instruct, to advise the patients, should be considered the great business of each day.

The chief medical officer should be assisted in the management of the female patients by female superintendents, educated in a central asylum; and also by the senior house-pupils. No pupil, however, should attend on the female patients until he had been six months in the house, and had become known to the chief officer to be a person

who might be confided in. No house-pupil should visit the female wards without one of the female superintendents, and the out-pupils of the establishment should only be admitted to these wards with the chief officer. The youngest female patients should be under the particular superintendence of the senior female keeper, and separated from the rest.

The visits of the out-pupils to the asylum should be made once a week, and be of sufficient duration to familiarize them with the habits of the patients : not less than two, three, or four hours being on these occasions devoted to the asylum, under the direction of the chief officer and his assistants.

The airing-ground of the asylums should be sufficiently spacious to admit of division into four, or at least into two compartments. Each patient, able to get out, should be in the airing-ground during a part of each day ; as few of them at a time as possible. Those capable of being amused, might be allowed to join in any active out-door occupation or exercise, under strict inspection ; and commonly with the medical assistants or the keepers.

Noisy patients should have a separate airing ground, or should be taken out at early hours, so as not to disturb the rest. The convalescent might go out of the grounds for exercise, with a superintendent, or with a house-pupil ; indulgence of this



kind being held out as an inducement to quiet behaviour.

The asylum should be open to the public, from two to four P. M. three days in the week; but no visiter should go round the wards or airing-grounds without a superintendent or house-pupil.

The friends of patients, wishing to see them, should be admitted to the Inspector's rooms when the patients they wished to see were in the airing-grounds; or be allowed to see the patient, without the patient's knowledge, in the wards. This permission should never be refused. In case of convalescence, the attendance of friends should sometimes be requested.

The list of the patients in every asylum should be open to the public: and the list of the out-patients of each district should be shown, at any time, on application to the Governor of the asylum, by any individual.

To each asylum there should be appointed a certain number of medical visitors, one of whom should visit the institution at least once a week, and make a general report of the state of the establishment. These visitors should be men of established reputation, and receive a proper remuneration. They should not be under the control of the Governor or chief officer of the institution, but act under the Secretary of State. They should not be

associated with the establishment for ordinary attendance on lunatics at their own houses.

The usual medical attendant of any patient confined in an asylum should be admitted to see such patient, on application to the chief medical officer, at any time; and the ordinary medical attendant of a lunatic attended at home, and visited by one of the medical associates of the house, should have the privilege of addressing the medical or other visitors at any time, without consulting the medical associate, or the assistants, or the chief medical officer of the asylum.

All persons confined in the Asylum, or in any way restrained, should be allowed the use of pen, ink, and paper, and permitted to address sealed letters to the Governor of the Asylum, or to the Chief Medical Officer, or to the Medical or other Visitors, or to the Secretary of State, or to any other individuals. In the latter case, if the letters were a source of disquietude or annoyance, they might be opened at the Secretary of State's office, and forwarded or not, at his discretion.

Ministers of religion should be permitted to converse with patients desirous of that consolation, always, however, with the sanction of the chief medical-officer of the institution; and divine service should be regularly performed in each asylum.

Quarterly Reports of the number of patients



admitted into the asylum, or discharged from it, and of the names of the out-patients, and of the visitors, medical and non-medical, should be made to the Secretary of State ; and a full and particular Annual Report.

To effect these objects, there would be required,  
A Central Asylum in each large town, or one in each county.

To such Asylum must be attached ;—

A Governor (not a medical man).

A Board of Commissioners, or of Visitors.

A Chief Medical Officer.

Two or more Medical Assistants or House Pupils.

Male and Female Superintendents or Keepers.

A Steward, Housekeeper, and Servants.

Medical Visitors of the Lunatic Asylum.

Medical Associates for Visiting the Insane at home.

A Chaplain.

There should also be a certain number of separate houses, or apartments, for single patients, attended by Physicians or Surgeons not residing in the asylum, but associated with it ; such smaller establishments being visited as above provided.

The expenses of the out-patients would be wholly defrayed out of the funds of such patients, or by their friends ;—including fees to the medical associates of the asylum.

The patients in the asylum would be of three

classes—one, of rich patients, the surplus of whose payments would go to defray the general expenses—another, of those contributing a proportion towards their expenses—and a third, of paupers paid for by the parishes; some of whom would act as servants, and reduce the necessary house establishment.

The chief medical officer, and one or two of the senior house pupils, should have salaries. That of the Chief should be liberal. The other house pupils would pay a premium. The out-pupils would pay certain fees.

The male and female Superintendents or keepers should be respectable, and liberally paid.

The Asylums might be partly supported by Voluntary Subscriptions.

Among the results of a plan of this kind, however it might be found requisite to vary the details, it must follow, that the insane would be better protected, and that medical men would become better acquainted with diseases of the mind.

Few of the above suggestions will, I imagine, require explanation. All of them are the result of such consideration as the subject seemed to deserve; and each is intended to obviate some evil, or to meet some difficulty. *Some* change is evidently demanded; and I shall attend to the



comments of my professional brethren with a sincere desire that such changes may be effected as the public anxiety and the interests of all individuals seem equally to call for.

Let me be permitted, in conclusion, to remind the members of my own profession, that in the vast and various range of studies which form a part of our duty, no department offers a larger field for pathological discovery than that which includes disorders arising from primary or secondary irritations of the Nervous System. The great interest attached to anatomical and physiological pursuits seems sometimes to prevent our passing on to the application of the knowledge we acquire by them to the art of relieving disorders of the functions which the latter explain, and of preventing morbid changes in the structures which the former display. Whilst the anatomy and the physiology of the brain have, since the commencement of the present century, attracted such minute and particular attention; whilst all the intricacies of its structure have been unravelled, and many attempts have been made to comprehend the mystery of its functions; the doctrine of diseases of mental manifestation has received little accession. Opinions have been repeated rather than examined, and little or nothing has been added to the means of removing or preventing such diseases

by agents directed to the development and governance of mental power, or to the restoration of physical energy. Yet on so obscure a subject, advantage will be gained from blending the partial light which may be derived from pathology, with that which physiology throws upon processes of which the natural performance excites our admiration, and the interruption robs us of all that makes existence valuable.

Improved habits of life, and an enlightened system of medicine, are daily decreasing the number of the disorders which primarily affect the corporeal fabric ; but as communities advance in zeal for intellectual acquirement, in refinement, and in all the means and appliances of luxury, the human frame, not destined for perfection, is seen to become exposed to the operation of new causes of disorder ; and, in a particular manner, the susceptibility of its nervous structure becomes increased as respects all ordinary influences. From hence arise new irritations, various in their character and intensity, but all, by duration or excess, passing into disorder and disease ; disturbing the actions of the body and mind, and altering even the physical characters of the organs in which those actions are performed. The physician finds the result in almost every case that he is called upon to investigate ; and observes, in his daily practice, the widening empire of



causes which, almost undeveloped in new societies, modify the symptoms of disease in a large majority of those whose minds are exercised by the complicated excitement and anxieties of communities which have reached a high degree of cultivation. He neglects half the history of half the cases concerning which he is consulted, if he overlooks the inward influence of the restless mind. He is unprepared for the duties required by the age in which he practises, if he forgets the slow processes of change which the advance of man, from the savage state to a state of the utmost refinement, has effected, or is effecting. In various parts of the world, and in various stations of life, all the steps of this long and predestined process are visible at once; but in no country are all the causes connected with high civilization and intellectual culture more spread over the constitution of society than in our own, and in none, consequently, are their effects more developed, or more deserving of attention.\*

Without the aid of medicine, the ordinary

\* Sir Andrew Halliday states, that the number of the insane in England has "become more than tripled during the last twenty years."—*Letter to Lord Robert Seymour*. The increased prevalence of what are called *Nervous* disorders, many of which are produced by irregularities of the circulation in different portions of the nervous system, is established by common observation.

influences to which men are subjected, and the various accidents to which they are exposed, would soon render the greater part of mankind helpless and miserable. But if to prevent such wide calamity be the chief glory of our art, certainly its most brilliant achievements are performed when, by averting the disturbances of bodily disorder on mental processes, and by counteracting the increasing tendencies to mental susceptibility, it preserves to the individual, in times and in societies of men in which the gifts of the understanding exceed all other possessions in value, the power of controlling his emotions, of commanding his expressions, of regulating his affections, of exercising and directing all the faculties of his mind, and of governing all the parts of his conduct.







